

a  
Memoir  
and an  
Account  
of his  
Visits  
to  
India

Edwin  
Montagu

S. D. WALEY

The life of Edwin Montagu is a poignant story. As a child he was unhappy, sensitive and afraid of the dark, dreading the unknown and perpetually worrying about his health. From an early age he was opposed to his father's deep attachment to the practices of orthodox Judaism. Young Edwin's refusal to observe the Sabbath, and to fast and worship in the Synagogue on the Day of Atonement earned his father's displeasure and anger. But he thrived on his mother's love, and to her he went to pour out his sorrows and despair.

Edwin Montagu's political career, which began with so much promise, ended tragically. At the age of thirty-seven he became a Cabinet Minister, much loved and admired by the best minds of his generation. In the same year he was married to Venetia Stanley, one of the most gifted and attractive women of her time. Many things pointed to him as a future Liberal Prime Minister. But in 1922, he was contemptuously dismissed from office by Lloyd George and died in November 1924.

Part I of this book is a brief memoir of Montagu's brilliant but short career : intimate glimpses of the Cabinets of the time and his encounters with Asquith, Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Ramsay Macdonald, and others. Sir David Waley—who died in January 1962, soon after completing work on this book—with the help of his wife who is Montagu's niece, brings to fresh life a dynamic figure who dedicated many years of his short life to the Reforms which were intended to pave the way for India to become a self-governing dominion.

Montagu visited India twice : as Under Secretary in 1912-13, and as Secretary of State in 1917-18. He kept a diary on each occasion, and Part II of this book consists of extracts from the 1912-13 diary which has not hitherto been published.

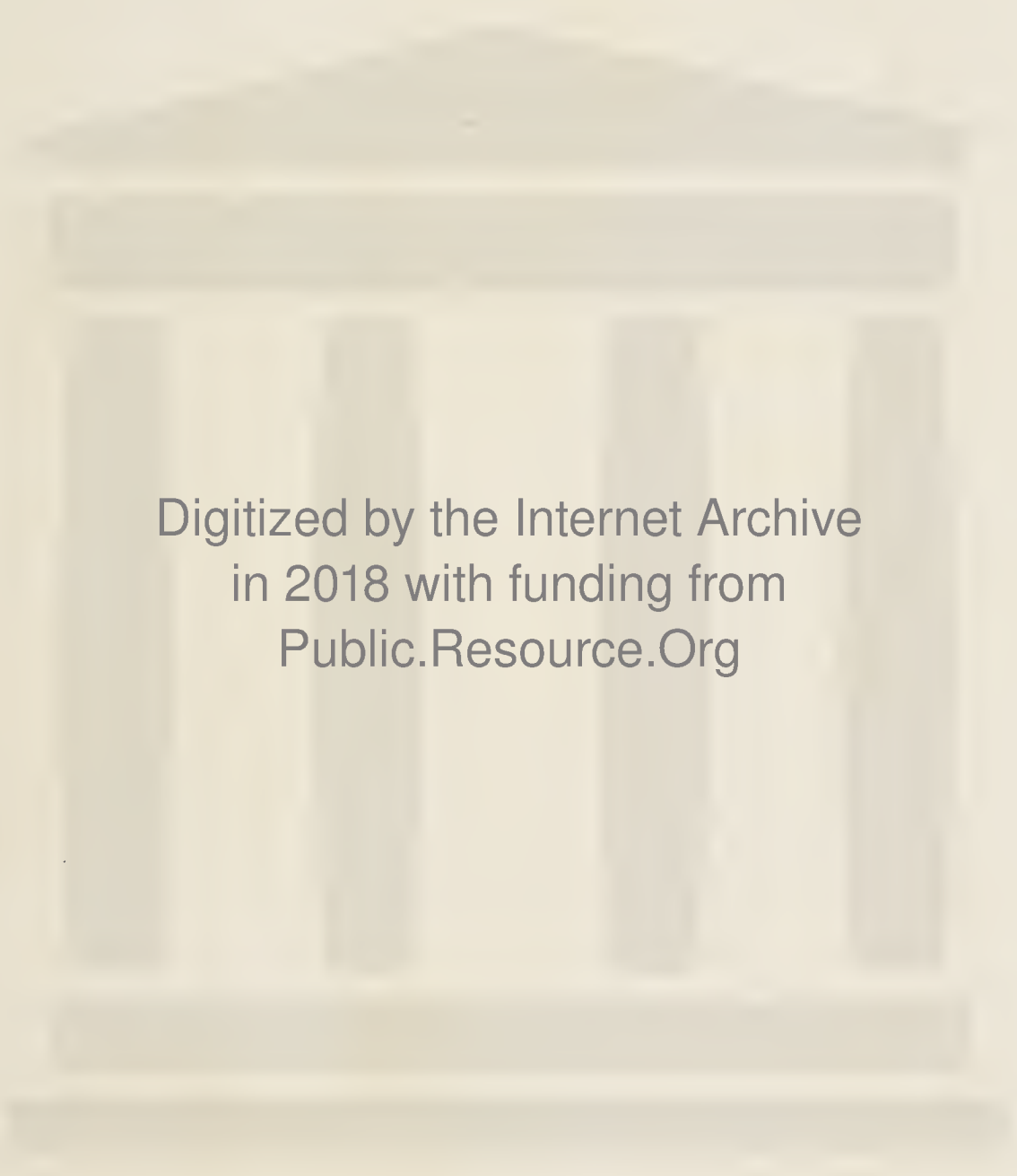
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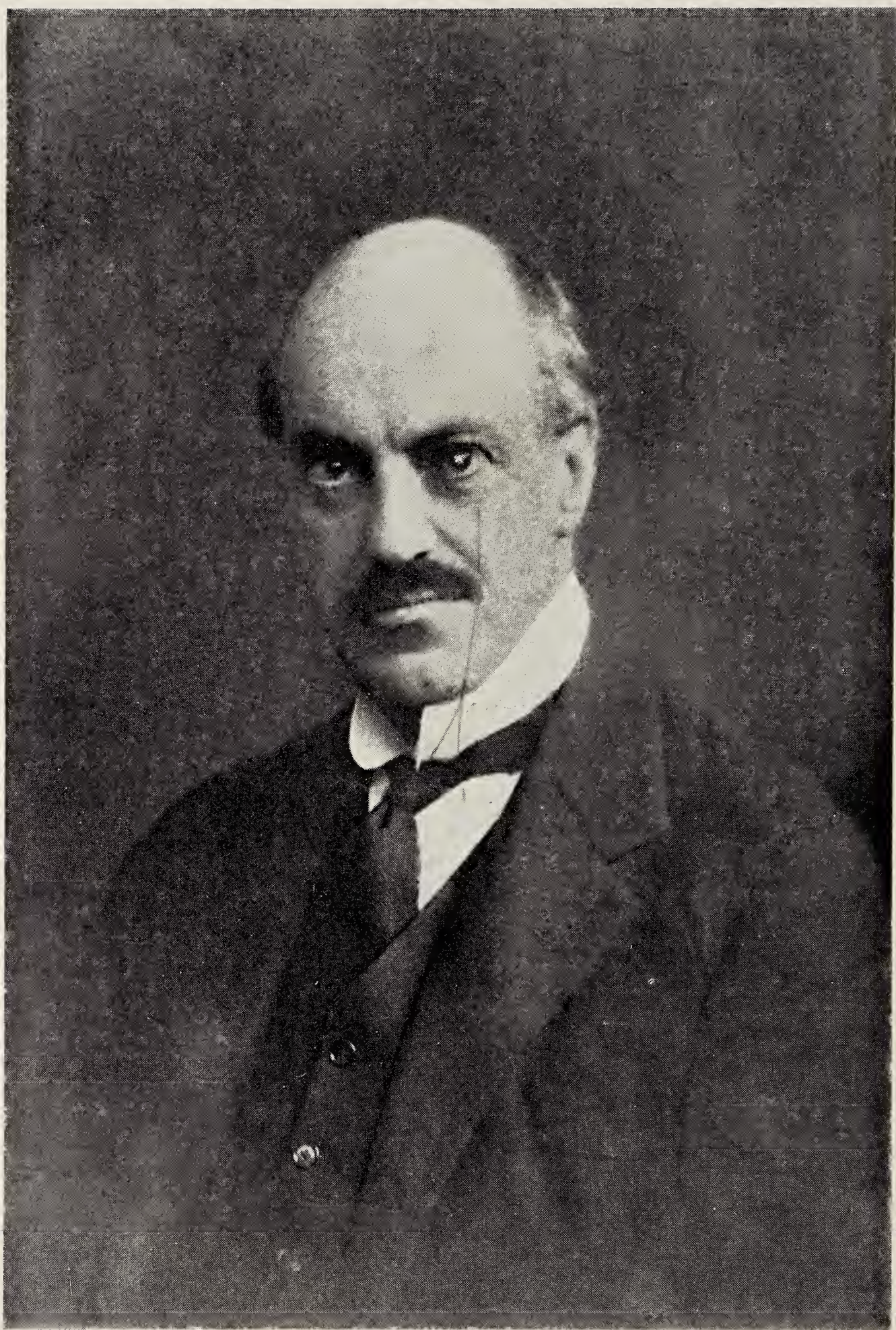
EDWIN MONTAGU





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Edwin S. Montagu



# EDWIN MONTAGU

*A Memoir and an Account  
of his Visits to India*

by

S. D. WALEY



ASIA PUBLISHING HOUSE

BOMBAY · CALCUTTA · NEW DELHI · MADRAS

LUCKNOW · LONDON · NEW YORK

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*First Published* : 1964

PRINTED IN INDIA

BY D. D. KARKARIA AT LEADERS PRESS PRIVATE  
LIMITED, BOMBAY AND PUBLISHED BY P. S.  
JAYASINGHE, ASIA PUBLISHING HOUSE, BOMBAY

## *Preface*

PART I of this book is a brief Memoir of Edwin Montagu's brilliant and tragically short career. With the help of my wife, who is Edwin Montagu's niece, I have tried to give some suggestion of a magnetic, but baffling character, who was loved and admired by many of the best minds of his generation, only a few of whom are now alive.

Montagu paid two visits to India, the first as Under Secretary from October 1912 to March 1913, the second as Secretary of State from November 1917 to April 1918. He kept a Diary on each occasion; the 1917-18 Diary was published in 1931; the 1912-13 Diary, to my mind far the more readable of the two, has not hitherto been published. Part II of this book consists of extracts from the 1912-13 Diary.

S. D. WALEY





## Acknowledgements

I AM deeply grateful to all those who helped me to write this book.

I gratefully acknowledge permission given to me by Sir L. E. Jones and Messrs. Macmillan to quote from *Edwardian Youth*; to Professor Richard Kahn on behalf of Messrs. Rupert Hart-Davis, Sir Geoffrey Keynes and himself to quote from *Essays in Biography* by J. M. Keynes published by Messrs. Rupert Hart-Davis; to Messrs. Ernest Benn Ltd. to quote from Halévy's *History of the English People* published by Messrs. Ernest Benn; to the Hon. Anthony Asquith for permission to quote a letter from the late Countess of Oxford and Asquith; to the Right Hon. Lord Beaverbrook to quote from the Lloyd George *War Memoirs* and *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, and a letter from Lloyd George of 22 June, 1909; to Associated Newspapers Ltd. to quote an article which appeared in the *Daily Mail* of 7 July, 1910; to Mr. Ronald D'Arcy Hart to quote from his book *The Samuel Family*; to the Norfolk Mercury Series to quote from the Memoir by Mr. Jim Vincent in the *Norfolk Post* of 22 November, 1924; to the Right Hon. Lord Beaverbrook to quote from his books *Politicians and the War* and *Power and Politicians*; to Lady Diana Cooper to quote from her book *The Rainbow Comes and Goes* and from the late Lord Norwich's book *Old Men Forget*; to Mr. Stephen McKenna to quote from his book *Reginald McKenna*; to the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office to quote from the Official History of the Ministry of Munitions and from *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1920*; to Mr. Frank Owen to quote from *Tempestuous Journey*; to Mr. Christopher Sykes to quote from *Two Studies in Virtue* published by Messrs. Collins; to Messrs. Heinemann to quote from *Indian Diary* edited by Venetia Montagu; to *The Times* for permission to quote articles which appeared on 7 July, 1910 and 10 July, 1920; to the Librarian of the India Office Library for permission to quote from the Montagu Papers in that Library; to the Hon. Sir Harold Nicolson for permission to quote from *Curzon: the Last Phase*; to Professor Sir Roy Harrod for permission to quote from the *Life of Keynes*; to Colonel Terence

Maxwell to quote a letter by Sir Austen Chamberlain; to the Right Hon. the Marquess of Reading for permission to quote a letter by Stella Lady Reading; and to His Royal Highness the Duke of Windsor for his gracious permission to quote two letters which he wrote to Mr. Montagu and to Lord Reading when Prince of Wales.

S. D. W.

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SIR DAVID WALEY did not live to see his biography of Edwin Montagu published. He had completed the text but had intended to add one or two further explanatory notes.

I have not attempted to do this, but have completed the Index which he had partially prepared.

R. E. WALEY



PART I

MEMOIR





## CHAPTER I

### *Boyhood and Cambridge (1879-1905)*

EDWIN MONTAGU, who was born in 1879, became a Cabinet Minister at the age of thirty-seven in 1915, and in the same year he married one of the most gifted and attractive women of her time. Many things pointed to him as a future Liberal Prime Minister. A few years later, in March 1922, he was contemptuously dismissed from office by Lloyd George and died in November 1924. He dedicated many years of his life to the Reforms which were intended to pave the way for India to become a self-governing Dominion, but when he left office many leaders of Indian opinion had rejected the Reforms, disorder was widespread and Montagu's life-work seemed to have failed. He was outstandingly intelligent; he had noble ideals; he was greatly loved by his personal friends; he was both the most melancholy and the gayest of men. By the present generation he is little remembered.

Edwin Montagu's father came of a Liverpool family, which traced its descent to two Jews of Strelitz in North Germany who came to England in the middle of the eighteenth century. One of these was Samuel Yates whose three daughters married three sons of the other immigrant from Strelitz, Ralph Samuel. This Samuel family gave many leaders to Liverpool Jewry.

Edwin Montagu's paternal grandfather was a comparatively humble person—Louis Samuel, a watchmaker and silversmith. Louis Samuel's second son, Montagu Samuel, was born in 1832. In the school list at his school he was put down under M instead of under S and this is said to have suggested to his parents that, as the Samuel family was so large, it would be distinctive to change their son's name from Montagu Samuel to Samuel Montagu. This change was made in 1842 and formally confirmed when Sir Samuel Montagu became a Baronet in 1894, over fifty years later.

In 1847 the family moved to London; six years later Samuel Montagu, when twenty-two years of age, joined with his brother in starting a business in banking and foreign exchange. His rise from

a modest beginning to wealth and honours was a true nineteenth century romance. In 1862, at the age of thirty, he married into one of the rich and exclusive Jewish families; his wife, Ellen Cohen, was a grand niece of Sir Moses Montefiore. In 1894 Samuel Montagu was made a Baronet and in 1907 a Peer. He was a Liberal M.P. for 15 years (1885-1900) and his numerous philanthropic activities made him one of the leading figures in Anglo-Jewry.

Thus the Good Fairy lavished many gifts on him in his long and prosperous life. But Carabos the Wicked Fairy contributed what was, at any rate in my eyes, a surprising flaw in his character. Though a Liberal in politics he was intensely bigoted in his conservatism as a rigidly orthodox Jew.

During Edwin's school days he was an unhappy child, sensitive, shy, timid, afraid of the dark, dreading the unknown or novel and perpetually worrying about his health. While more fortunate boys enjoyed games and activity, Edwin very early developed a passion for natural history and especially birds and this was a lifelong interest. The nervous weakness which spoiled his boyhood remained a handicap all his life and he was always subject to moods of deep melancholy and haunted by presentiments of early death. He had, as a child and throughout his life, a craving to be loved; he was deeply attached to the German maid, Rosie, who looked after him and "had a wonderful way with him", and her name was the last word he spoke.

A great cause of Edwin's unhappiness from his boyhood onwards was his opposition to his father's deep attachment to the practises of orthodox Judaism: on the Sabbath no work must be done, there must be no travel by train or carriage, no match must be lit. During Passover week no crumb of leavened bread must be left in the house, and the Day of Atonement must be a day, from sunset to sunset, of complete fasting and worship in the synagogue. Edwin's refusal to observe the fast made his father very sorrowful and very angry. One of the reasons for which orthodox Jews were so attached to the traditional observances was that they marked the Jews as a race apart. It was precisely for this reason that Edwin Montagu was so strongly opposed to them. Edwin was an English gentleman and anything which marked him as belonging to a race apart was repellent to his view of life and his ambitions. As a Radical he refused to be bound by outworn traditions and was



repelled by literal orthodoxy, and as a patriotic Englishman he became, as will be seen, a violent Anti-Zionist. His remark to Lord Morley that he had been trying to get out of the Ghetto all his life shows how this conflict of ideals had been a cause of unhappiness from his early years.

A glimpse into Montagu's attitude towards religion is given in a letter which he wrote in December 1909 to a friend who had decided to become a clergyman. "I have won through the time when prayer meant nothing to me largely by the help of such men as you."

From the age of eight to the age of twelve, Montagu went to a Preparatory School in Kensington Gardens Square with the grand name of "The Doreck College." His school reports were excellent. "A good pupil. Always a gentleman in behaviour", and in December 1890, "Has always worked well and happily and been a pleasant pupil."

In the Summer Term of 1891, when he was twelve and a half years old, Montagu went to the Jewish House at Clifton College. At first he was happy: "Mr. and Mrs. Polack", he wrote to his mother, "are very kind and all, rather nearly all, the boys are nice." He was a contemporary of "Cohen terts, otherwise Bobbie"—as Sir Robert Waley Cohen was then described. "Yesterday morning I had an interview with Mr. Glazebrook commonly known as the Bogey Man. He was not very charming in fact he was horrid." The Jews were teased by the other boys: "Of course", Edwin comments, "you take no notice."

But in July 1891 he was attacked by the severe headaches, from which he had suffered in the past, and wrote:

"Here is a pretty state of things. I am utterly miserable. I don't know what to do. I have tried all sorts of remedies, but in vain. My headache is unbearable but I must correct your error in thinking I eat too many sweets. I am utterly dejected and half mad with pain and can scarcely bear the sorrow of ending the term in such a poor way. Please try and console me in the reply."

The trouble recurred in the Autumn. In October Montagu wrote to his mother of his headaches. "I begin to despair of getting rid of them. Please *don't* worry or be miserable about me, but try and come down and see me very soon."

From December 1891 to April 1892 Montagu went on a voyage round the world with a tutor, J. D. Israel. Edwin wrote to his mother at every opportunity. It was rough in the Bay of Biscay; he landed at Malta, his first of many visits abroad. The places visited included Brindisi, Port Said, the Suez Canal, Colombo, Melbourne, Adelaide, Hobart, Queenstown, Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington, Invercargill, Napier, Auckland, Honolulu, San Francisco, Salt Lake City, Denver, Chicago, Niagara and New York, leaving for home on 20 April. The voyage was a complete success. Edwin's health was good, despite rough seas and long train journeys, Mr. Israel was "very, very nice." Edwin enjoyed the sightseeing with all the fervour of a boy of thirteen.

Montagu returned to Clifton for the summer term of 1892, but during this and the autumn term he was as unhappy as ever. In April 1893 his family wisely removed him from Clifton and in the summer term of 1893, at the age of fourteen he went to the City of London School on the Victoria Embankment. Here he got on well and his health was good. He became enthusiastic on Natural History and in particular birds.

Montagu went in December 1895, at the age of sixteen to University College, London. He had a successful holiday in the Orkneys, Shetland and the Highlands in July and August 1896 and in the French Riviera in January 1897 and hoped to pass the Inter-Science Degree examination in July 1897. He failed in his first attempt and was typically downcast. "I am so fearfully disappointed and thunderstruck that I find it difficult to believe. I do not know what is to become of me." He passed in July 1898.

At one stage he thought of devoting his life to Zoology, but by November 1897, when he was eighteen he began to feel that he would like to become a doctor; however a few months later in August 1898 he writes dubiously of doctoring as "my (?) profession." This was in a letter from Nässundet in Sweden where he had gone on a holiday to see and shoot birds, after successfully passing his examination.

Montagu went up to Trinity College, Cambridge, in October 1898 at the age of nineteen and a new chapter in his life began. Suddenly the shy and delicate boy became an ambitious, mature and sophisticated man. He seemed to a contemporary a rather solitary figure and slightly saturnine. A vivid description of Edwin



Montagu when he was an undergraduate at Trinity College, Cambridge, is given by Sir L. E. Jones in his book, *An Edwardian Youth*.

“But a deeper impression was made on me by another guest in these rooms—an undergraduate who struck me as unbelievably mature, almost world weary. His long, ugly bony face was pock-marked like a photograph of the moon, but his eyes held me: sombre, patient, unhappy eyes of extraordinary intelligence. He held the talk: he was sophisticated and mocking, and more amusing, I thought, than anyone I had met.”

The first thing that happened was a terrific row with his father. When Montagu made his voyage round the world, complicated arrangements were made to ensure that he held strictly to the Jewish dietary laws, the most tiresome of which was that all meat had to be killed according to the Jewish laws. Similar arrangements were made on the occasion of his holidays in Scotland in 1896 and 1897. But, as Montagu grew up, he rebelled against the rigid ceremonialism which his father wished to impose. His father looked upon Judaism as a solemn trust handed to him by his ancestors and to be handed on by him to his children; if his children rejected these vitally important principles, they would, he said, bring his grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. His father added that, as a leader of orthodox Judaism, he would be humiliated if his son ceased to observe the orthodox way of life. He regretted his weakness in allowing his son to study science and to go to Cambridge. Edwin's friends, he said, would think that Edwin, not having a Jewish name or Jewish appearance, was trying to conceal his Jewish race and would despise him.

When Edwin and his father discussed the question, they only got angrier and angrier with each other. Edwin therefore wrote to his father in November 1898 to explain that he acted on the basis of his profound conviction from a sense of duty.

“Religion”, he wrote, “concerns only the individual and can be no man else's concern. By race I am an Englishman and my interests are mainly in England, but I will never forget that I am a Jew and the son of a Jew and I will always be a good ‘Jew’ according to my lights, my definition of a good Jew differing from yours. It is an

awful thing to lose a father's love as I fear I am doing now and how I shall live without it I cannot think. But I must not and will not consider the temporal or temporary advantages . . . . However much it grieves me or my relations I must try and be true and honest . . . . It grieves me terribly to write like this to a father who does so much for me, but I can't help it. Try to forgive me. I must do my duty."

Edwin was made miserable by this painful controversy which went on year after year. In 1901 he reluctantly agreed, when at home, to go to Synagogue on the days of the main Festivals, New Year and the Day of Atonement in the autumn and Passover in the spring. In 1902—and he was by then twenty-three—he further undertook not to be away from home for the Festivals without his father's consent. Not only during his father's lifetime, but even after his death in 1911, every autumn and every spring when Montagu was able to snatch a few days' holiday in the country which he loved, he would be made unhappy by reluctantly breaking into his holiday or by facing a major row if he did not do so.

Montagu enjoyed his first year at Cambridge, including his first University rag, his first Boat Race, and his first speech at the Union. He had to oppose the Government's conduct of the Boer war.

"I was suffering from an awful headache and felt very ill. I had had nothing to eat all day. I began quietly amid absolute silence. The House was asleep, but I soon roused them. More by my voice which was truly pathetic than anything, I succeeded actually in awakening and moving a Union audience. I saw that they had all come down to vote against me and I resigned myself to tub-thumping. The Union rose as one man and hissed Smuts and Schreiner who I held up to them as examples of Cambridge men. I could hardly help laughing at them."

Montagu spoke at more than thirty debates at the Union, and his great ambition, which he only achieved after two disappointments, was to become President. He welcomed the opportunity to obtain reputation, or notoriety, for defending an unpopular thesis, such as "that the abolition of the Monarchy will soon be a neces-



sity." "The only use of the Monarchy", he argued, "was to furnish a convenient anthem with which to close popular entertainments." On other occasions, Montagu "deplored the excess and excesses of musical comedy", he opposed the motion that "learning has increased, is increasing and ought to be diminished", and on another occasion the motion "that the excessive size of Trinity is disastrous to itself and the best interests of the University", while he supported a motion on "the need for putting a check upon the journalistic enthusiasm of the University", which had nine University journals in existence, including the *Granta* of which Montagu was at the time joint editor.

Montagu was Librarian and became Acting President of the A.D.C. (Amateur Dramatic Club), and was given the part of the watchman in the *Agamemnon* of Aeschylus. This made him late for a debate at the Union when he was due to support a motion. He apologised by explaining that he had come a long way, from Argos, and his lateness was due to the fact that Troy had been taken.

Montagu also became secretary of the University Liberal Club and in this capacity he had his first meeting with both Lloyd George and Asquith. This meeting with Asquith was, as it proved, the foundation of Montagu's political career.

In the summer of 1900 Montagu obtained a Second in the Natural Science Tripos. He was in typical despair at not getting a First. "I am no good at Science", he wrote, "and at the Bar too I should fail to keep myself alive, I suppose. Could I farm, I wonder? If only I have the means I believe I might do something by travelling and collecting, but it would be a very mean fate for all my ambitions. I feel it must be the Bar, but how shall I succeed there, after all my failures hitherto?" But he ended his letter by saying: "It must not be thought that I am unhappy at being a miserable failure. I try to be, but this place and the people that it contains are so delightful it is impossible."

Montagu at the age of twenty-one had decided on a political career, but thought of the Bar as the "shortest (and it is long enough) road to Parliament . . . . Had I been born to possess riches I think my ideal would have been to possess land, to control and farm it myself and to represent the neighbourhood in Parliament." Montagu's next letter to his mother is also about his career:

“I do not think any good can accrue from discussions of my future. It is useless to make you and father understand what you can’t understand and so I give it up. I merely make the final remark that natural history (the meaning of which is to you unintelligible) is no more a profession than fishing, but differs from the latter in that those who practise it in far off countries may arrive at interesting and in a small way important results if they have plenty of time and money and no ambition to rise high in their country.”

The theme continues in a further letter:

“What you say about my father confirms me in saying that he does not understand me. To all who know me and are capable of judging it is obvious that I *can’t* be a surgeon or a doctor. Not only am I not fitted for it, but I hate the idea of disease too much. Further, one must begin young in politics. My father knows that—why then does he prevent me?”

But soon afterwards (in October 1900) Montagu’s father agreed to his reading Law and Montagu was sure that he would never regret being a Bencher of the Inner Temple. At this time Montagu was much happier; he had succeeded in getting a part in a Greek play and had been elected Librarian of the Amateur Dramatic Club.

In January 1901 Montagu, with his father and sisters, visited Greece and Constantinople. When back at Cambridge, he began to read a little law as recreation, while still working at Science. With remarkable prescience he wrote to his mother: “I am looking about for a Liberal Prime Minister who wants a Private Secretary.” This wish was in fact furthered when Asquith came to dine with the Cambridge Liberal Club and Montagu made a very successful speech. Montagu’s spirits rose, but fell again when he was for the second time rejected for Presidency of the Union.

In December 1901 Montagu learned that his younger brother had become a partner in the family firm and reflected sadly on his own future prospects. “Coupled with my ambition”, he wrote to his mother, “I have perhaps more ingrained than any other of my family a love of what money can procure, such as comfortable surroundings, travel and especially sport. And neither my ambition nor my financial hopes are any nearer realisation and I am getting



very old. [He was twenty-three.] What is to become of me?"

In April 1902 Montagu's time at Cambridge as an Undergraduate was nearly finished and a letter to his mother discusses whether he will live at home.

"Much as I love all at home, yet I realise that it will be difficult for me to fit in as a resident there. We must, I suppose, try but the strain, the friction, the difference of interests and the difference of religions will be terrible. Here [at Cambridge] God knows there is worry enough to drive me mad, but it is with things and not with people—all is peace. At home I think it is primarily a difference of education and a difference of religion that will make things difficult. You say things worked smoother last Vac—only because most of the friction landed against Netta [his eldest sister]. Under the circumstances I think I must be allowed now and always my solitary breakfast that I love as opposed to the letter-reading food scramble of 12 K.P.G. [Kensington Palace Gardens.]

"You say Lily was looking forward to seeing me. Poor girl, I believe she of all those at home believes there are possibilities about me and spares a corner from the marvellous work she is engaged in for me, but her life and my life are destined always to be apart, for she works for sectarian purposes—I abominate them. She strengthens the barriers, I want to abolish them. So I cannot take an interest in her club."

Montagu feared that he would not get through his Tripos, but fulfilled his great ambition—Election to be President of the Union. He asked "how far is it a consolation for being ploughed to hear publicly that one has been the best Vice-President for years?" He scraped through the Tripos with a Third.

Having obtained his B.A. degree, Montagu gave up science and proposed to study Law and hoped, after passing two examinations and eating his dinners, to be called to the Bar in October 1903 "at the ripe age of 24." A letter to his father recapitulates his four years at Cambridge.

"My achievements will then [i.e. when he is twenty-four] be:

"1 Honours Degree, two parts Science

"1 Presidency of the Union

- "1 Acting Presidency A.D.C.
- "1 Secretaryship Cambridge University Liberal Club
- "1 Presidency Magpie and Stump
- "A certain amount of fame
- "A certain amount of notoriety
- "A certain number of friends
- "A few enemies
- "And a glorious time of four years and a term."

The "Magpie and Stump" was a famous debating Society founded in 1866 for the encouragement of wit as well as wisdom, and as a relief from the seriousness of the Union.

After a holiday in Shetland, Montagu returned to Cambridge for a fifth year, to be President of the Union, to read Law, and to speak at Liberal meetings all over the country.

In 1903 Montagu started work with Messrs. Coward Hawksley and Chance, Solicitors, at 30 Mincing Lane. He hated this. "No work has ever bored me more", he wrote at the time, and said of the law some years later:

"It is a profession which I would never recommend to, or willingly see adopted by, anybody I was fond of. It is a bloodsucking, all-domineering profession, which takes a man who practices it, twists him and distorts him, and demands from him youth, energy, vigour, long years of disappointment and despondency, waiting for a practice and bitter regret when the practice arrives; work from morning to night, without excitement, without reward, not allowed to choose the subjects which engross you, with a hidebound etiquette and a cynicism which is not even surpassed by the medical profession itself."

In the autumn of 1903 Montagu, having finished his hated work in the Solicitor's office, planned a visit to Canada to win converts to Free Trade Liberal Imperialism as opposed to Chamberlain's policy of Imperial Preference. He also hoped (rightly) that the visit would improve his health, which was suffering from overwork. He tried to collect a team, but, while he obtained sympathy



from the Liberal Leaders, the team finally consisted of Montagu himself and Bron Herbert. (He was afterwards Lord Lucas. He was appointed President of the Ministry of Agriculture in 1914 and in 1915 was killed in the R.A.F. at the age of forty). Montagu and Herbert worked enormously hard, interviewing all and sundry, and on their return they published a book, *Canada and the Empire* with a preface by Lord Rosebery. Its theme was that Canada did not wish to receive Imperial Preference.

Two quotations will illustrate their argument. "Outdoor relief is not wanted by the Canadian farmer at the expense of the British tax-payer, and his loyalty can only be acquired by an appeal to his pride and honour, and not by an appeal to his pocket and his industry." "Canada looks with scorn on an insulting attempt to purchase her loyalty and requires nothing to increase her prosperity, while she fears a loss of her independence."

Montagu had been adopted as Liberal Candidate for the West Cambridgeshire Division in 1903, at the early age of twenty-four. He had now given up the idea of practicing as a barrister and he regarded as a tragic waste of time the arrangement which his father had made for him to work in the Chambers of Mr. Pollock, Q.C., in 1904. He tried in vain to get his father to release him from the arrangement. When his mother urged him to go to bed earlier and to get up earlier he explained: "My work cannot begin till about five because, before that time I am condemned to penal servitude at the Temple. Can you not conceive the terrible strain of work all day at uncongenial stuff, then three hours railway journey, then the excitement and fatigue of a meeting?"

To add to Montagu's troubles, he found that the allowance of £500 a year made to him by his father was quite insufficient. From the age of twenty-four to the age of twenty-six Montagu was tormented with ill-health, overwork, worry and loneliness. He wrote to his mother in May 1905 that he was very depressed, could not sleep, and had no time to eat since he had meetings every night. It is a tragic letter:

"Oh mother darling, you have no notion of the unhappiness of my life. You and all my brothers and sisters have always been able to live at home in plenty. I am so terribly lonely seeing no friend or relation from week to week and talking nothing but

politics. The work I like immensely, the life I like, but it is so terribly, maddeningly lonely, and I am nearly driven mad with money troubles . . . . It was assumed that I was not to be a business man when I was twelve and since then I have had to find my own way more and more each step onwards."

Montagu's father agreed to pay his political expenses, if detailed accounts were submitted. Montagu reluctantly accepted this rather humiliating form of help, adding: "I fully realise that the gift you gave me was the more valuable, for it must have cost you more pain to give it to me in that I fear that I have not in any way, and in nothing that I undertake, much of your approval." Montagu promised to leave no stone unturned to get called to the Bar, but reminded his father that he had never promised to practice.

## CHAPTER II

### *Parliamentary Private Secretary to Asquith (1906-1910)*

Aet. 27 to 31

THE GENERAL ELECTION came in January 1906 and Montagu was elected to the House of Commons where he represented West Cambridgeshire till 1918 and Cambridgeshire, which had become a single constituency, no longer divided into West and East, from 1918-22.

Before telling some of the story of his political career, which started so brilliantly and ended so tragically, it will be of help to quote the sketch of his character written by Keynes after Montagu's death.

“He was one of those who suffer violent fluctuations of mood, quickly passing from reckless courage and self-assertion to abject panic and dejection—always dramatising life and his part in it, and seeing himself and his own instincts either in the most favourable or in the most unfavourable light, but seldom with a calm and steady view. Thus it was easy for the spiteful to convict him from his own mouth, and to belittle his name by remembering him only when his face was turned towards the earth. At one moment he could be Emperor of the East riding upon an elephant, clothed in rhetoric and glory, but at the next a beggar in the dust of the road, crying for alms, but murmuring under his breath cynical and outrageous wit which pricked into dustier dust the rhetoric and the glory.

“That he was an Oriental, equipped, nevertheless, with the intellectual technique and atmosphere of the West, drew him naturally to the political problems of India, and allowed an instinctive, mutual sympathy between him and its peoples. But he was interested in all political problems and not least in the personal side of politics, and was most intensely a politician. Almost everything else bored him. Some memoir writers have suggested that he was



really a scientist, because with Nature he could sometimes find escape from the footlights. Others, judging from his parentage and from his entering the City in the last two years of his life, make out that he was, naturally, a financier. This is also far from the truth. I saw him intimately in the Treasury and in the financial negotiations of the Peace Conference, and, while his general judgment was good, I do not think that he cared, or had great aptitude, for the problems of pure finance. Nor, though he loved money for what it could buy, was he interested in details of money-making.

“Mr. Lloyd George was, of course, the undoing of his political career, as, indeed, Montagu always said that he would be. He could not keep away from that bright candle, but he knew, poor moth, that he would burn his wings. It was from his tongue that I, and many others, have heard the most brilliant, true and witty description of that (in his prime) undescribable. But whilst, behind the scenes, Montagu’s tongue was master, his weakness made him, in action, the natural and victim; for, of all men, he was the easiest to use and throw aside.

“I never knew a male person of big mind like his who was more addicted to gossip than Montagu. Perhaps this was the chief reason why he could not bear to be out of things. He was an inveterate gossip in the servants’ hall of secretaries and officials. It was his delight to debate at the Cabinet affairs of state, and then to come out and deliver, to a little group, a brilliant and exposing parody, aided by mimicry, of what each of the great ones, himself included, had said. But he loved it better when he could push gossip over into intimacy. He never went for long without an intense desire to unbosom himself, even to exhibit himself, and to squeeze out of his confidant a drop of—perhaps reluctant—affection. And then again he would be silent and reserved beyond bearing, sitting stonily with his great hand across his mouth and a staring monocle.”

Keynes gives a vivid and convincing description of Montagu’s life in Whitehall and Westminster. But this was not the whole of his life, for he had warm friendships with many different types of people, although he constantly complained of his tragic loneliness.

First there was a Cambridge friend and his family, a mother and father and two sisters. This family had a grouse shooting in

the North of Scotland which Montagu visited each autumn. This was a simple and pious family. His friend's mother wrote to him in 1907:

"You know without my telling you how much we enjoy having you, it was very sad your visit this year being so short. We just love that C. [the name of the house] should be a little peaceful by-water, where those who are being carried down the stream may turn in and be rested a little. I always have the feeling about you that you take life so *very* earnestly, and that all its problems do press you very hard, and that it is so hopeless when we are young to believe that everything must come right, and that 'all things are working together for good' really."

In October 1907 Montagu was asked to join a little group called the "Magic Circle" to which his friend belonged. Montagu wrote to his friend a very revealing letter:

"Although much desirous, as I think you know, of accepting an invitation that I have for years been desirous of receiving, I have not yet written to do so for two reasons. Firstly, I fear that, all of you, the best of men, are taking into your midst, when you invite me to join you, one whose outlook on this world is neither as simple, nor as pure, as yours. All of you I think are much younger than I am, and yet everyone is in a way older. You all have better senses of proportion, you all realise the futility of struggling against the bars set by nature to each man's destiny. Each of us in this world has his work to do, and should do it without casting jealous eyes on other people's work. So each of us has, or ought to have, his own particular happiness which may not be as complete as other happinesses, but which is the only happiness which one can achieve. Grasp it, and one is happy, try for more and one loses one's allotted happiness. This has often been said by others before, and yet I cannot act on it, and I fear my somewhat cynical, embittered, lonely nature, living a lonely life, travelling across from town to town and from house to house may spoil or cast a gloom upon your coterie. On the other hand, it may be that joining you and communion with you may give me more philosophy, more strength to bear and courage to act, more tolerance of spirit and kindness of nature."



Somewhat later a second and completely different set of friends included members of the Asquith family, Venetia Stanley, and Lady Dorothy Howard (afterwards Lady Henley). He stayed with these friends in their country estates. He did not care for golf or riding, but most enthusiastically studied, and shot, birds. We are told of intellectual conversation in which Montagu would "be passionately wrong on purpose and fierce about trifles;" we are also told of his "anti-culture pose and pretence not to have read anything in order to escape the probings of the *précieuses*." To Montagu's friendship with Duff Cooper and Lady Diana I will refer later.

In Montagu's own family he was the eighth child in a family of ten. He was deeply attached to his mother and wrote to her, often complaining, occasionally quarrelling, but always affectionately every week when he was not with her. Of his brothers and sisters he was fondest of Lionel, whose cheerfulness and calm he admired. In all his letters he sends messages to all of the family at home and never omits to include Rosie, who had been his nurse. He was kind and charming to his nieces, including my wife. He was intimate with one or two of his numerous relations and there were others whose sight he could hardly tolerate.

"Your heart", wrote one of Montagu's intimate friends, "is a very large mansion." During the years 1908 to 1913 at least seven lady friends wrote long letters to tell him some of their inmost thoughts. For example, Lady Dorothy Howard wrote to him:

"I aired and bleached and dusted my thoughts from speeches and footlights by sitting with my friends of the glen: insects that are really fairies climbing up the tree trunks: the troutlings snuggling into the stones and roots in the beck: the sun on the peat water: and the snowdrops in masses down the glen: and the smell of wet earth and the cawing of the rooks who may even get a better choir-stall in Heaven than Handel for the joy of their songs. Do you know why I care for politics? Because some day politics will bring that into everyone's life."

A very different friend wrote: "Is it my natural stupidity and humility which makes me love people I cannot understand? Makes me sit at their feet adoringly and try the while to rummage their mind and see what it is made of? I look at yourself's photograph

wondering who the dear lovable stranger is. I know you so little it's deliciously tantalising!"

Thus, while the general public saw in Montagu an ambitious and promising politician, devoted to gossip and party politics, his intimate friends knew him as kind, lovable and magnetically attractive, but given to profound melancholy, restlessness, loneliness and self-distrust. In writing of him it is so difficult to give a true picture, since his gloom can be fully recounted, but his charm is impossible to recapture.

When Montagu was adopted as Liberal Candidate, Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule had split the Liberal Party and the country had been mainly under Tory Governments for nearly twenty years. In the Liberal view, the Conservative Party represented vested interests—the Church of England, the brewers and the landlords. The Liberal Party cast for itself the role of St. George in conflict with the Dragon. The Tariff Reform controversy split the Unionists and thus St. George won a sweeping victory in the General Election of January 1906, supported by Free Traders, Nonconformists and Temperance Reformers. At first the Education Bill and the Licensing Bill, to undo the mischiefs of the Tory Education Bill of 1902 and Licensing Bill of 1904, seemed the burning topics of the day. But the House of Lords was allowed to checkmate both of these moves. The legislation by which the Liberal Government is in fact remembered is in the field of Social Reform including Old Age Pensions, Progressive Taxation, Health and Unemployment Insurance, the Coal Mines (Eight Hours) Act, the Wages Councils Act and the Children Act. As Halévy says: "The election of 1906, on the surface a victory of Free Trade, and apparently a Nonconformist victory, had been in reality and at bottom a victory of the proletariat."<sup>1</sup>

Montagu was a Liberal by heredity and by conviction, reinforced by his affectionate admiration for Asquith. He thought of himself as a Radical in contrast to Asquith, his Leader, who could be regarded as a Whig. But Montagu's Radicalism was not of an extravagant or fanatical type, even by the standards of fifty years ago.

Montagu was genuinely interested in Social Reform mainly from two angles, its effect on the popularity of the Liberal Party

<sup>1</sup> Halévy, *History of the English People*, vol. 6, 1952 edition, p. 120.



and the relief of hardship suffered by his constituents in Cambridgeshire. He regarded the demagoguery of Lloyd George with distrust and dislike, and from the intellectual point of view, he was not particularly attracted by financial and economic problems.

In 1905 he hated Home Rule and joined the Liberal League, which looked to Lord Rosebery for leadership. (By 1912 he had become a convinced Home Ruler.) He felt sure that Campbell-Bannerman would make a bad leader of the Liberal Party (a mistake shared by many others) and was thrown into despair when Campbell-Bannerman spoke in favour of "Home Rule by instalments" in November 1905. Montagu had feared that this would prevent a Liberal success and prevent his own victory in West Cambridgeshire which was so vital to him.

Montagu made a brilliant start. He was, in February 1906, appointed Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Asquith), who had heard him make a speech at a Cambridge University Liberal Club dinner in 1901. Some of Montagu's letters and reports to Asquith between February 1906 and February 1909 have been preserved. Their main purpose was usually to warn the Chief, whom he so deeply admired, of the dangers to the Liberal cause and to criticise him, when he felt bound to do so. These letters record Back Bench Liberal opinion of the day, and display many of Montagu's characteristics—his readiness to despond, his irony and rhetoric, and his critical attitude to almost everyone except his hero.

In 1907 there is a long letter in January, on the theme that there was nothing so important to the Liberal Party as the 1907 Budget.

"Every member of Parliament relies upon this budget to substantiate the popularity of a Party whose claim to the affections of the Electorate is at present based upon anticipation. Of course you care so little for public appreciation—there is so little of the demagogue about you—that I sometimes fear you don't realise what is being demanded by those who hope from you and how great is the power of the demagogues who occupy exalted position in the estimation of the people.

"For eleven years Liberals and Radicals have preached the good things to come from a Liberal budget—'the free breakfast table' is become rickety with old age . . . the strict application of the glorious principle of taxing the rich for the benefit of the



poor: and the materialisation of such projects as Land Values, Local Taxation re-adjustment etc. etc. are dear to them.

“... You and Haldane [Secretary of State for War] both belong to that wing of our Party which I am afraid the overwhelming majority of the Party hardly trust, and only tolerate because of the enormous capacity, ability and power of the leaders of the Wing. They call you a Whig. The new Parliament knows you little: they saw you, as they thought, coerced on Trades Disputes, and leading the party of compromise on Education. You won their hearts when you wound up, on a memorable night, [probably December 11th 1906] an Education debate in which Balfour preceded you; and again, you gave them infinite satisfaction, but a satisfaction only, I would remind you, of promise, when you received an Old Age Pension Deputation. Although the past year has teemed with incidents proving your statesmanship, these two almost alone have enhanced your popularity.

“... The political horizon is so lowering that I am frightened.... When you honoured me by asking me to be your Private Secretary, I determined and have tried to serve you whenever I could find opportunity. If in this, the first important thing I have tried to do, I have been officious, or if, worse still, my officiousness offends you, I am sorry. My one excuse can be that it seems to be part of my function to try and inform you of the opinion of your Party with regard to your activities, and that I want so much that it shall not be said that Harcourt<sup>2</sup> was the last great Chancellor of the Exchequer.

“Yours sincerely,  
“EDWIN S. MONTAGU”

Mr. Asquith opened his Budget on 18 April 1907. He promised Old Age Pensions, he differentiated below £2000 a year between earned and unearned income, he reduced the rate on earned income by 3d and increased the Death Duty on large estates. The Chancellor's Budget speech was enthusiastically applauded.

The only other surviving political letter of 1907 is to McKenna,<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Sir William Harcourt (1827-1904) was Chancellor in 1892-1895 and imposed Death Duties.

<sup>3</sup> Reginald McKenna (1863-1943). Financial Secretary to the Treasury, 1905; President of the Board of Education, 1907; First Lord of the Admiralty, 1908; Home Secretary, 1911; Chancellor of the Exchequer, 1915-16; Chairman of the Midland Bank.

the President of the Board of Education. The education controversy arose from the conflict between two views. The Church of England view was that children must receive denominational teaching and be brought up as Anglicans and that to teach them to be Christians without also teaching them to be Church of England was in fact to pervert their faith. The Nonconformists' view was that the money which they paid in rates must not be used to teach a denominational religion which they profoundly believed to be wrong.

This is the background to Montagu's letter of 27 September, 1907 to McKenna.

"I am very frightened", he wrote, "of anything that would lead to the identification of the Liberal Party with secularism. . . . During the last month I have been fortunate enough to stay in a small Scotch country house at which one of the few other guests was the Archbishop of Canterbury,<sup>4</sup> for whom I conceived a great liking, and with whom I discussed at some length and on various opportunities the education question." The Archbishop had seemed to favour sectarian teaching out of school hours: he suggested a Conference. Montagu stressed "the enormous importance of obtaining, if we can, a solution which is not opposed by the official part of the Church of England, and which at the same time satisfies the Nonconformists; for we do not want the bitter hostility of the Church of England at the next General Election, if it can be avoided."

Montagu had stayed with the Asquith family at Glen of Rothes in September 1906, and perhaps it was then that his intimate friendship with Margot Asquith began. In the Spring of 1907 she was ill. During her convalescence at Folkestone she wrote to thank for "flowers and constant kind thoughts" and ended "Write to me a nice long letter very distinctly as I read your writing badly and oblige your very grateful and affectionate Margot Asquith." By January 1911 they had got to know each other well enough for Montagu to confess to her that at first he had disliked her.

"I had no idea", she wrote, "you ever either disliked me or thought that all my beloved friendships with interesting people would be bad for me—make me spiky and over critical or un-humble . . . . I am horribly impatient and restless and irritable, but I am very near

<sup>4</sup> Randall Thomas Davidson (1848-1930).



the earth and not really tamed or harnessed, but sensible enough to conform. My life has not been at all easy, I can assure you. Henry has pulled me through and all you say of him touches me very much—more than you will ever know. The kind of things you minded at Rothés I always mind. I get so tired of brains! I value heart a hundred times more. All my clever friends had profoundly sympathetic natures. I soon dropped those that hadn't."

As Montagu had anticipated, he found it trying to live with his family at Kensington Palace Gardens and thought it would save him much worry and trouble, time and energy to find a room near the House of Commons.

In 1907 he was overworked, having one of the most difficult of constituencies to attend to besides his work as Asquith's Secretary. His health continued to trouble him; he wrote to his mother in January 1907:

"I was saying this morning I have rarely seen anybody as ill as I look, but I think it is just nerves. Fits of awful depression are merely produced in me by the inevitable solitude in which I live, either living quite in silence or with acquaintances and strangers. I do not suppose I shall have a long life because I look sixty to-day, but I intend to do all I can to keep a life which, unhappy as it is, is on the whole very precious to me. I know, dearest mother, you want to help, but believe me there is nothing you can do."

In February 1907 Montagu's father stopped paying the salary of his political agent at Cambridge; Montagu protested, but wrote again the following day to apologise if he had pained his father.

"We have been living recently on such much better terms than in the old days, that I am sorry this has arisen. If only I could induce you to make me an inclusive allowance of a suitable size these things could never arise . . . Whatever may be said against me and however I may enjoy my work, I never spend your money or my time on pleasure. I never go to a theatre, hardly ever to a dinner. It is all work, direct or indirect, and from morning to late night I lead an absolutely lonely life, cut off from all save casual acquaintances."

In May 1907 Montagu was cheered up by a holiday looking at birds in Hungary. But troubles quickly returned. In July Montagu's father sent him a letter "abounding in affectionate terms, accusations of dishonesty and broken vows, of selfishness and the gorging of food, of avoiding his family, and running through a catalogue of his misdeeds since he left school." This provoked an angry reply and the quarrel "plunged me", Montagu wrote, "into further depths of misery than is my wonted habit of mind."

But Montagu could never quarrel for long with his mother. Someone had apparently suggested that she should lead a more fashionable life (or something of that kind).

"I hope", Montagu wrote, "you won't allow her to dictate or suggest to you any alteration in your sweet self. You are naturally proud of father and may you both [through] long life [be] your own selves to enjoy the love which has sustained you together so long. But you can't alter yourself and no one should want you to try—that is no one with the heart or the brains of a sparrow."

In September 1907 the Day of Atonement came, as it had in previous years, in the middle of the holiday in the country which Montagu enjoyed and regarded as essential for his health. When he broke off his holiday to keep the Festival, his father showed no gratitude; and when Montagu had to ask for financial help, it was given inadequately and grudgingly.

"Why do I put up with it? Because I am at present too great a coward to throw up everything and leave 'home' to make my own life . . . . let me urge you to remember that the biggest coward can be goaded to acts requiring courage. I am sorry to write like this. A blank despair is coming over me. You love me and I love you deeply, devotedly, passionately. But you can't constitutionally write without digging at me. It does hurt me. I love and admire my father and am grateful for his moneys, but can't he grease the wheels by a little more kindness?"

When Montagu's mother suggested that he should gratify his father by being called to the Bar and that this would make his father more generous, Montagu was distressed at the re-opening of



“subjects on which I have already said heaps of time all that there is to be said” and sent a type-written letter and kept a copy “in order that I may not again have to write to you on the subject.” He wrote that he had become a student of Law to help him politically; it was impossible to make politics one’s profession and to do anything else; he could not earn as much from being a barrister as he could from being a politician, and particularly on the Liberal side to be a barrister was a great handicap politically. In short, he did not intend to sit for his law examinations nor to practice at the Bar. “Besides that”, he concluded, “may I say that I can see no connection between my passing the Bar exams and the finances of this constituency: as to gratifying my father, that would seem to be impossible.”

Montagu’s longing for a home of his own is expressed in a letter of January 1908. “I hate always to be told I am more suited to a town [constituency] than to a County. I have no interests in a town and love the country.” He wanted a house of his own in the constituency with a garden and a small farm. “Oh, to have a home, and not to live in lodgings, permanently camping out.”

From February 1908 to 7 April 1908 Montagu wrote a weekly report to Asquith as Leader of the House. The first report includes a meeting with Sir Anthony MacDonnell,<sup>5</sup> (“he reminded me more of a battered Bismark than ever”).

“He says that Ireland has never been so crimeless as when Bryce was Consul and regretted vehemently his departure. [On 22 December 1906, Bryce became Ambassador in Washington and was succeeded as Chief Secretary by Birrell.] He asserts that he went to America to ‘think things over’, because Birrell informed him that he did not consider that it was part of the duty of a Liberal Minister to maintain law and order. He feels that it is quite possible that we shall have to re-conquer Ireland, at least so far as sending troops again into the country.”

On 11 February 1908, Montagu reported :

<sup>5</sup> Sir Anthony, (subsequently Lord) MacDonnell (1844-1925), G.C.S.I., K.C.V.O., Lieutenant Governor, United Provinces, India, 1895-1901; Permanent Secretary, Dublin, 1902-08.

“The opening of this Session, which should witness the culmination of Governmental Glory, is very depressing. The Private Member seems to be unenthusiastic, listless, disappointed, where he is not disaffected and disgusted.

“It is assiduously put about the Lobbies that the Liberal League element in the Cabinet, [Asquith, Haldane and Grey,] is resisting the ‘Radical’ element in their patriotic attempts to fulfil Liberal pledges by reducing armaments . . . The President of the Board of Trade [Lloyd George] is in favour of the Nationalising of railways, and ominously hints that we shall have to go to the country next time with something appetising as a substitute for Tariff Reform.”

On 3 March 1908, Montagu reported:

“No man in this Parliament has achieved a greater personal triumph than yours when introducing your Bill [the Licensing Bill, of which the object was to reduce the number of public houses]. Never has the Party in this Parliament been so united or so enthusiastic, and you reaped your reward when you were compared in the *Daily News* to Gladstone, which is, I understand, the most superlative journalese that can be found.”

On the Education Bill, “you have not succeeded in annexing the support of the Archbishop of Canterbury; indeed I think he will go with the ‘hue and cry’, unless he receives encouragement and is ‘nailed’ at an early date. I am to lunch with him tomorrow.” Finally, “Macnamara<sup>6</sup> regards Lloyd George and Winston as the dangers besetting the Government, and significantly hinted that the Editor of the *Daily Chronicle* is a great friend of both Lloyd George and John Burns.”<sup>7</sup>

The following week, 11 March 1908, Montagu, after reporting views about reducing the cost of the armed forces, added:

“By the bye, Haldane’s promptness to succumb to temptation to

<sup>6</sup> T. J. Macnamara (1861-1931), Parliamentary Secretary, Local Government Board, 1907; Parliamentary Secretary, Admiralty, 1908-20; Minister of Labour, 1920-22.

<sup>7</sup> John Burns (1858-1943), one of the first Labour M.P.s, President, Local Government Board, 1922-32.



make speeches, and the interminable length of these speeches, is fast exasperating the House. He deals with subjects which most of us do not understand, and he deals with them so discursively, so unendingly, so frequently, that what used to amuse us is now looked upon as boring and time-wasting. Succi, the fasting man, the gentleman who plays the piano for forty-eight hours without stopping, Haldane the speech-maker are interesting on their first appearance; but, as specimens of abnormal humanity, they cease to draw money as side shows."

On 17 March 1908, Montagu told Asquith: "Your leadership of the House this session has been an unqualified success so far, everyone of your real friends is justified in saying that the more our Party knows you, the more our Party appreciates you." Montagu went on to look further ahead. "The Liberal Party is once more in its old and almost traditional position: it has tickled up the sore points in pretty nearly every interest in the country—Land is against it, Property is against it, Beer is against it; but it must not make its old, and almost traditional, mistake of leaving those whom it has irritated unaffected, or almost unaffected, by achievement." The Licensing Bill was unpopular.

"That is a view universal in the Lobbies and universal in the Constituencies where, not only Members, but Organisations are very, very frightened. Now there is no doubt that Old Age Pensions will completely alter the situation. (1) They must show the road to expansion, so as to cut away the ground from under the feet of those who would outbid us. (2) This country is not socialistic, and does not like more State interference than can be helped. An inquisitorial system, where the squire will know and will be able to hear the cross-examination of every man in the village, and, worse still, his neighbour will hear all about his circumstances, will not be tolerated, even though it produces five shillings a week."

In the Report of 31 March 1908, Montagu explains his own position about Home Rule.

"As regards the Home Rule debate last night, I do not know what to say . . . I joined the Liberal League and 'swore off' Home Rule,

at a time when, theoretically, I was a Home Ruler. If I am no longer a Home Ruler, it is because I have looked at the Nationalist Party in the House of Commons, spent two winters in Nationalist Ireland, and grudge the enormous time and electoral energy dissipated on Irish matters. So far as I know English constituencies, although interest in Home Rule is practically negligible, so also is opposition to Home Rule."

Montagu then turned to Finance and urged a raid on the Sinking Fund. "It is a political mistake of Liberalism to leave too much for dissipation by Conservatives at future times." Half the Liberal Party wanted a reduction of taxation and of expenditure. "The other half wants increasing expenditure on social reform, which is a title given to the collective satisfaction of each man's crank and hobby-horse."

By 7 April 1908, Campbell-Bannerman's retirement and the succession of Asquith as Prime Minister had been announced.

"Your four Private Secretaries<sup>8</sup> dined together to mark the end last night, and although many, besides those who worked for you, desired nothing more than to see the country under your Premiership, the breaking up of the old order to make room for something more glorious is an uncomfortable period. May I add a personal word of my own. The greatest pleasure and the greatest honour I have ever known have been to serve you. It is perhaps not unnatural that I should not desire so much to congratulate you on becoming Prime Minister of England as to want to congratulate you on achieving success, the success which you are certain to attain in the time that is to come. You will be able to count on the devoted loyalty of your Party and, as I hope you know and believe, on me, wherever and whenever you want my services."

<sup>8</sup> The four Private Secretaries were: J. S. Bradbury, afterwards Lord Bradbury, Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, (I was his Private Secretary) and British Delegate on the Reparation Commission; R. S. Meiklejohn, afterwards Sir Roderick Meiklejohn, K.B.E., C.B., Private Secretary to Mr. Asquith, 1905-11, First Civil Service Commissioner, 1928-29; Mark Sturgis, afterwards Sir Mark Grant-Sturgis, K.C.B., Private Secretary to Mr. Asquith, 1906-10, Special Commissioner of Income Tax in 1910 and Assistant Under Secretary for Ireland, 1920-24; and Montagu himself.



Montagu apparently expressed anxiety as to his prospects of appointment as the Prime Minister's Parliamentary Private Secretary, for Vaughan Nash<sup>9</sup> told him on 12 April 1908: "Asquith told me this morning that your name was to be included with the rest of the Private Secretaries in the announcement this morning. My impression is that he never regarded it as an open question at all."

In May 1908 Montagu wrote to Asquith:

"I have turned up the first letter I wrote to you on political matters after leaving Rothes [where he had stayed with the Asquiths] in October 1906 and find that I urged as our goal a scheme of Old Age Pensions, the remission of the Sugar Tax and the reduction of the debt contracted by our predecessors. I am grateful to you that I have been allowed to share in your triumphant achievement of this programme and, though I shall long lament the fascination of the Treasury and the seething schemes it begets, and although I find much difficulty in getting interested in the vortex of patronage and the claims of the 'on-the-makers' at No. 10, yet the past three years and your achievement is something to be proud of."

On 20 May: "You must indeed be impervious to the ordinary emotions of man if you are not satisfied with the first few months of your leadership. Confident though I have always been, it has exceeded my wildest hopes for your success."

When Asquith ceased to be Chancellor of the Exchequer and became Prime Minister, this involved a considerable change in Montagu's work as his Parliamentary Private Secretary. In May 1908 he told his mother that he was not very happy at Downing Street. "I do not find the work congenial and am beginning to fear I never shall. Oh for the good old days at the Treasury."

There was a debate on Old Age Pensions on 16 June 1908. Montagu reports: "The unanimous opinion in the Lobbies was that George has often been heard better and Haldane more opportune. George went out of his way to excuse rather than to commend, and his unaccustomed restraint from Hyde-Parkism led to incoherence

<sup>9</sup> Vaughan Nash (1861-1932), C.B., C.V.O., Private Secretary to Campbell-Bannerman, 1905-08 and to Asquith, 1908-12; Vice-Chairman of Development Commission, 1912-29.

and repetition. He gave too an impression that he hated the Bill.”

On a very different matter:

“There is no getting away from the fact that ours is a Nonconformist Party, with Nonconformist susceptibilities and Nonconformist prejudices. I shall not be doing my duty, if I were not to recall, preposterous though it may seem, the strong feeling expressed in various places at the presence of Miss Allen [the dancer] at your Garden Party the other day. On the other hand, it is equally characteristic of our Party that so many Members who object to meeting the lady were able apparently to recognise her.”

On 31 July 1908, at the end of the Session Montagu wrote to Asquith:

“It is the universal and emphatic opinion in all parts of the House that you have succeeded wonderfully in your very difficult task. You were so commonly supposed to lack many of C. B.’s qualities of heart that you were predicted to be about to lead your Party by the sheer force of your intellect—by fear and not by affection. Even those who have never been able to forgive your connection with the [Liberal] League have absolutely lost that ‘pernicious superstition’.”

Walter Runciman had succeeded McKenna as Minister of Education: “Walter Runciman”, Montagu wrote, “has achieved a personal success that is almost marvellous. He has driven his difficult team of disappointed men and Church haters with marvellous judgment. For so young a man [thirty-eight], I think his success has been wonderful. I am poisoned in my judgment of him by personal affection, but it would do you good to hear the universal admiration which is felt for him in the Lobbies.”

A letter of December, 1908, contains some examples of Montagu’s fondness for gossip, which, as Private Secretary, it was his job to collect. The progress of the Port of London Bill “was rather hampered by the fact that Winston always insists at frequent intervals on each point on making a really Imperial speech worthy of the occasion if he were giving Home Rule to India.” “Every Scotsman, loyal or disloyal, growls at Sinclair [Secretary for Scotland, after-



wards Lord Pentland] who has hardly a friend among them, and they tell me he has all the obstinacy of a weak man." "I am creditably informed by people of all shades of opinion that Birrell is the most difficult of Irish Secretaries on record . . . Nationalists in the House, Irishmen in the places where I have been staying the last two winters . . . all unite in saying that his indetermination and continual vacillation drove MacDonnell to retire and are not atoned for by his charming personality. C. B. took him into his Cabinet as a phrase maker with an opportunity to establish a reputation as a statesman. I am afraid he has not done so." Of Pease, the Chief Whip: "He has plenty of pluck, little knowledge of men, a devoted admiration of Winston, no political knowledge and a great liking for people who will feed and amuse him."

During 1908 Montagu was often gloomy and unhappy. His health troubled him. "Dr. Rose Bradford", he wrote to his mother, "says I am still suffering from much the same functional disturbance of the heart action, but that it is much better." And "I don't get as many headaches as I used to, but they last much longer."

When the engagement of Montagu's younger brother Gerald was announced in September 1908, Montagu reflected sadly on the contrast. "Here is Gerald, my father's partner and trusted son, wealthy, healthy, and happily settled. Here am I, un-trusted and often tolerantly condemned, poor, unhealthy, unhappy, unsettled." No one, Montagu complained, would care to look out for a wife for him, "bad-tempered, cynical, uncouth, *poor*, with nothing to offer."

Montagu was disappointed in October 1908 when he was considered for an Under Secretaryship, but in the end failed to obtain it. As usual, the Day of Atonement added to his unhappiness. "I won't violate my conscience", he wrote, "if I get neither gratitude, better terms, easing of strained relations—nothing but fatigue and worry for it. And so I am looking for a means of livelihood." Montagu took a room at 20 Queen Anne's Gate for the autumn session, but no more is heard of his search for a means of livelihood.

In February 1909, Miss Violet Asquith [Lady Violet Bonham-Carter] was in Switzerland and Montagu wrote to her a letter which referred to the Liberal League which was regarded as having served its purpose, but was kept in being to avoid offending Lord Rosebery, and about the political situation as seen in a pessimistic mood.



“As regards the Liberal League”, Montagu wrote, “I quite agree with your excellent description thereof, and I can find but one use for it at the moment: it gives me a cheap bed and a good lodging house during Parliamentary Sessions, nearer London than my father’s house in Kensington, and if the League dies I shall have to bring my camp bed into my apartments in Downing Street, and cook my billy over a camp fire in the garden which you and George share between you. But a poultice has no principles, and the League has or had. Disgust at an Institution is not synonymous with disgust for its principles. This, however, does not much matter: it is rather a hark back to Tennant, and I will whip myself off. If only you could get over the difficulty of finding something to do for Allard—the best organiser in the Liberal Party wasted and workless owing to stupid jealousies—the League would die.”

As regards the political situation:

“Things are not well in London . . . The Constituencies are in excellent heart, ready and eager to be led. The fireworks of last Session are to be succeeded by soaked squibs this Session. People are complaining of your father’s silence, and it almost looks as if your father did not know what to do. Politicians are getting weak-kneed, constituents are getting more and more enthusiastic. As my confidence in your father grows, my lack of confidence in his colleagues grows too. I hope to goodness history won’t say they proved too strong for him.”

Montagu’s desire for political fireworks must have been satisfied by the famous Lloyd George Budget introduced on 29 April 1909, which was the most politically exciting event till the Ulster crisis of 1914.

This Budget raised fresh taxation to the estimated amount of nearly £14 million (and these were 1909 pounds, not 1960 pounds). The rates of duty were increased on motor cars, petrol, spirits, liquor licences and tobacco, income tax went up to a maximum of 1/2d in the £, and there was a supertax of 6d in the £ and death duties were up-graded. Nowadays all this would be regarded as the mildest dose of taxing the rich, but in 1909 the rich, at any rate, professed to regard it as ruinous. The strongest object-

ions were raised by a proposal (afterwards dropped) to tax the unearned increment resulting from the development of land.

Parliament debated this Budget with increasing vehemence from May till November 1909; Lord Rothschild presided over a City Protest League; Lord Swaythling attended a Liberal City Meeting addressed by Asquith. A Budget demonstration of 250,000 marched in Hyde Park. On 30 July 1909 Lloyd George made a speech at Limehouse which was regarded as the lowest depth to which demagogic oratory could descend. Cases were cited of land formerly rented at £2 an acre and, after development, sold for £8000 an acre, and the individual transactions of named Dukes were held up to obloquy. The budget was praised as "democratic" or denounced as socialistic, according to taste. Montagu admired Lloyd George's radicalism, but could not feel about dukes quite the same way as Lloyd George felt. On the Budget night Montagu entertained to dinner at the House of Commons the Prime Minister, Mrs. and Miss Violet Asquith, Mr. Lloyd George, his (Edwin Montagu's) brother Louis and cousin Stuart Samuel (M. P. for Tower Hamlets), and their wives, Mr. L. V. Harcourt (Minister of Works), Mr. C. E. Hobhouse (Financial Secretary to the Treasury) and sundry eminent officials. Mr. and Mrs. Runciman frankly preferred to go to their box at Covent Garden to hear Wagner. Of the nineteen persons present, three now (1960) survive—Lady Violet Bonham-Carter, D.B.E., Dowager Lady Swaythling and Sir Roderick Meiklejohn, K.B.E., C.B.

A letter from Lloyd George of June 22nd, 1909, written in his own hand, shows the rather formal relations between (to quote Keynes) the moth and the candle.

"June 22nd, 1909

"My dear Montagu,

"I was very unhappy when I heard you were going to vote against the Government in so critical a division and I feel very comforted to know that you have abandoned that intention and I am sincerely thankful to you.

"As to Budget Conferences I have held none since the introduction . . . You promised to take up for me that part of my proposals which bears on Development. The first Committee I held on the subject you attended and I am looking to you to help me



to formulate the proposals and to get them through.

“Should there be any other part of the Budget you feel specially interested in there is no one in the House whose assistance I should more greatly prize.

“Yours sincerely,  
“D. LLOYD GEORGE”

Montagu insistently urged Asquith to appeal to the country against the veto of the House of Lords, and not to contemplate *two* General Elections, the first on the Budget (which the Tories would be glad to lose) and a second on the House of Lords (which the Tories would hope to win).

“Your opponents”, he wrote, “are concentrating their efforts and even determining the action of the House of Lords on a conviction that they can force you to two General Elections on this issue, and it is their victory in the second upon which they are calculating. This is what is buoying up Arthur Balfour who hopes that the eventual passage of the Budget will rescue him from his Tariff Reform friends. This is a line of action [i.e. *two* Elections, one on the Budget and a second on the Lords] which will commend itself most to H. M., [King Edward VII] who will see in this an easy way out of all the constitutional changes which he dreads, and it is essential, I suggest, that you must employ every weapon that prescience offers to defeat this manoeuvre by a clear presentation of your action to the country before the Election.”

A letter which Montagu wrote to a friend, who had been abroad, on 1 November 1909, puts his views succinctly.

“The year has been occupied with the Budget. This has been hotly fought in the House where the Members have been teaching an imaginative and almost illiterate Chancellor the elements of practical finance. He has proved a marvellously clever pupil and the Commons have produced by his agency a really good and nearly watertight bill.

“The Cabinet responsible for the Budget have been preaching its charms. Some of them—you will not want them identified—have been explaining that its objects are purely financial and hum-



drum and that its methods are conventional and stereotyped. Others have been using it as a torch with which to light the damp squibs of radicalism in a Tory people and as the embryo of a new Liberalism. Others have used it merely as an implement of peevish and ill-informed invective. George himself (wonderful man) has ridden all three horses and I think successfully.

“The party is solid and in high fettle shedding with glorious nonchalance some of its less vigorous members every day. The House of Lords will throw the budget out without any conviction as to results but from a high sense of duty to their class on which they discern an attack. I think we should then ask the country to assert that the House of Lords

“(1) has no rights at all in financial matters

“(2) should not be permitted to reject bills

“(3) should be reconstituted to form a revising committee of Parliament reporting to the Commons.

“Tacticians among the Tories will try to force two elections in rapid succession on these issues. They will be helped by the King. We shall be fools if we don’t see this and prevent it.”

Montagu’s advice, that the Government should put forward a definite plan to limit the powers of the House of Lords and should seek a mandate for such a plan, was not followed. When the House of Lords rejected the Budget on 30 November 1909 by 349 votes to 134, after Five days of debate, Parliament was dissolved on 15 December 1909.

By 1909 Montagu had served as Parliamentary Private Secretary for three years and had become increasingly anxious for promotion. Vaughan Nash, his fellow Private Secretary, wrote to him in August 1909: “It grieves me to know that you are feeling overlooked and slighted by the P.M. Please try to be patient and next time you see the old man, you will be sunny and serene—or as near it as your gloomy, but lovable nature will allow you.”

Not only was Montagu disappointed in his ambition to be promoted, but he was still troubled by ill-health. He told his mother in February 1909: “My doctor assures me that there is as yet (I hate those words, I am such a coward) nothing wrong [with the heart] organically, but the nerves are again all wrong, though nothing like as bad as two years ago.”

He complained, too, of loneliness. In June 1909 he told his mother that he would always accept invitations to stay at country houses. "You see I am getting old [he was 30] and very lonely. . . I feel that I must enlarge my circle of friends on whom I shall one day have entirely to depend."

If Montagu married a non-Jewish wife, he knew he would cease to receive financial help from his father. At this time the question of getting married was much in his mind. Walter Runciman wrote to him in September 1908.

"She told Hilda [Walter's wife] that you are the only young politician who has interested her mother for two or three years. So that impression is all right. Then she at another time said some excellent things of you, but with all proper restraint. From what I know I am certain that so far you have done well there. Her heart is not at present captured by *any one*. I am inclined to think that you cannot be too direct. The sooner you see her the better."

Was the un-named "she" Lady Dorothy Howard? Did Montagu ask her? Whatever may be the answer, his thoughts turned elsewhere the following year.

The General Election came in January 1910. Montagu had held an immense number of meetings in his constituency in order to retain the seat and at the General Election he worked so hard that his health still suffered from his efforts three months later. In his rural constituency he specially needed motor cars and wrote bitterly: "Yesterday I received a letter from Lionel to say that all our motors are to be despaired of because we are polling the same day as Herbert [Samuel]. Now I receive your letter that all our remaining motors can be despaired of because we are polling the day after Stuart [Samuel]."

Montagu's efforts were rewarded. He won his difficult constituency, which had voted Conservative in 1886, 1895 and 1900, by a majority of 505 which was very slightly less than his majority of 513 in the landslide of 1906.

But the Liberal Party as a whole had a much reduced majority and became fatally dependent on Irish votes. Speaking at the Cambridgeshire Liberal Association on 28 February 1910, Montagu said:

“The result of the last Election, despite its revelation of local loyalty, was a bitter disappointment to those who believed that this Parliament would see the end of the veto of the House of Lords. It was equally certain that no Radical could refuse to attack the hereditary principle, provided that it did not delay the limitation of the veto. The last few days had proved that the majority that the Government could rely on was very small. Under these circumstances an early Election was inevitable.”



### CHAPTER III

#### *Under Secretary of State for India (1910-1914)*

Aet. 31 to 35

IN FEBRUARY 1910 Montagu was appointed Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for India. He was "haunted by a feeling of disloyalty" at leaving Asquith at a difficult time and felt that the India Office was divorced from ordinary political life and that the work was wholly new to him. The Secretary of State was Lord Morley<sup>1</sup> till November 1910 and Lord Crewe<sup>2</sup> thereafter. Thus Montagu was the spokesman for the India Office in the House of Commons and was in charge of the India Office while Lord Crewe was at the Durbar in 1911.

The Viceroy was Lord Minto<sup>3</sup>; the Morley-Minto constitutional reforms had been introduced in 1907 and, although Morley proclaimed that they were not intended as a first step towards self-government, they were inevitably so regarded by Indian politicians.

Montagu's appointment as Under Secretary of State for India was the beginning of a close connection with India which lasted for the remaining fourteen years of his life. He was Under Secretary from February 1910 to February 1914 and Secretary of State from July 1917 to March 1922. Between 1914 and 1917 he kept in close touch with his Indian friends and acquaintances. He visited India from October 1912 to March 1913 and again from October 1917 to March 1918. He had hoped to re-visit India after his resignation.

<sup>1</sup> Viscount Morley (1838-1923). Radical ally of Joseph Chamberlain and Charles Dilke from 1870. Chief Secretary for Ireland in 1886 and again 1892-1895; Secretary of State for India, 1906-10.

<sup>2</sup> Marquess of Crewe (1858-1945), K.G. Viceroy of Ireland, 1892-95; Lord President, 1905-1910; Secretary of State for India, 1910-15; Ambassador in Paris, 1922-28. Montagu characterised him as "patient, courteous, essentially conservative."

<sup>3</sup> Earl of Minto (1845-1914), K.G. Governor General of Canada, 1898-1904; Viceroy of India, 1905-10.

It was his ambition to succeed Lord Hardinge as Viceroy in 1915 and Lord Chelmsford in 1921.

It has often been said that it was Montagu's Jewish descent which made him, as an Oriental, fascinated by India. It would surely be truer to say that it was his imagination which enabled him to realise the vast magnitude of India, his liberalism which made him the life-enemy of race snobbery and police-state rule and his intellectual capacity and administrative ability which made India's problems so fascinating to him.

The *Daily Mail* of 7 July 1910 contains an interesting personal sketch of Montagu at this time. The following is an extract:

"It was not long after his appointment that Mr. Montagu showed that he was not a docile nonentity. True he did not bring himself into prominence . . . . He would sit at the end of the Treasury Bench, in the obscurity of the Speaker's Chair, where he could be seen by few. But if those who stimulate Indian unrest imagined from this that they had an Under Secretary who could be hustled or bullied, they soon found out their mistake.

"Mr. Montagu had not long to wait for a question from one of the pro-Indians below the gangway. The serious-faced young Under Secretary [he was thirty-one] rose to the Table and read out in a pleasant deep voice an uncompromising reply.

"Members were interested, as they always are in a new personality. The member below the gangway returned to the attack with a supplementary question. Mr. Montagu rose alertly to his feet, faced his critic and repeated with deliberate force all that he had said before. The House as a whole was very pleased.

"He is tall and rather ungainly. Lank black hair surmounts a white, overhanging forehead, and his single eyeglass somehow seems very incongruous in his intense, student-like face. But when he speaks his deep-toned, clear-cut phrases alter one's whole impression. He becomes at once a person to whom it is necessary you should pay attention."

This sketch was written on the occasion of Montagu's first Indian Budget speech on 6 July 1910 which was a landmark in his career. The sketch concludes: "The House of Commons, the most critical Assembly in the world, was deeply interested in his speech.



At the end of it Mr. Montagu took his seat, having established himself in the course of an afternoon as a new force in English politics."

The annual debate on the Indian Budget was normally a very humdrum affair. As Montagu said in his speech in July 1917: "Upon that day the House was always empty. What was the Indian Budget debate? It was a purely academic discussion which had no effect whatever upon events in India."

The striking speech with which Montagu introduced his first Budget was all the more remarkable. When he turned to the question of political unrest, he began by reminding his hearers of the complexity of the Indian scene.

"In India are associated under a single rule varieties of races far wider than can be found in the whole of Europe, as many different religions as Europe contains sects of Christianity. Stages of civilisation range from the Hindu or Mohammedan Judge on the Bench of the High Court to the naked savage in the forest. Grafted on to this diverse population, numbering nearly 300 million, is a European element, numerically insignificant, less than 200,000 in all, a population in no sense resident in the country, but of an importance in the spheres of education, commerce and administration wholly disproportionate to its numbers. The problem before us is to yoke a Government, as complex and irresponsible to the people it governs as the Government of India, to a democratic system in England which every year shows itself more determined to do its share in the Government of this great dependency."

Turning to the question of Indian unrest, Montagu said:

"I know full well that recent changes in the Indian attitude are confined to a very small proportion of the Indian population. One must never lose sight of the remarkable fact that nine-tenths, or over 200 million, of the vast population of India are still uneducated and illiterate. All talk of unrest is the talk of a small fraction of the vast number of the people which education has reached, and within this small fraction are to be found all those divergent forces which are classed together as political unrest. We must remember, however, that the amount of yeast necessary to leaven a loaf is very small; when the majority have no ideas or views, the opinion of the



educated minority is the most prominent fact in the situation. How much earnest thought and hasty judgment centres on the word 'unrest'. Of course there is unrest. It is used by some, adorned by instances of the inevitable friction of complex Government, as a proof of the failure of the British occupation. It is used by others, ornamented by details of crime statistics, as evidence of the lack of strength of British rule, of the lack of firmness of a particular political party in this country, and it is, of course, used by that portion of the Press which considers only its own circulation for sensational purposes. May I say how strange it seems to me that a progressive people like the English should be surprised at unrest. We welcome it in Persia, commend it enthusiastically in Turkey, patronise it in China and Japan, and are impatient of it in Egypt and in India! Whatever was our object in touching the ancient civilisation of the Indian Empire, whatever was the reason for British occupation, it must be obvious that Eastern civilisation could not be brought into contact with Western without disturbing its serenity, without bringing new ideas into play, without infusing new ingredients, without, in a word, causing unrest. And when we undertook the Government of the country, when further, we deliberately embarked on a policy of educating the peoples on Western lines, we caused the unrest because we wished to colour Indian ideals with Western aspirations.

"When we came into India we found that the characteristic of Indian thought was an excessive reverence for authority. The scholar was taught to accept the assurance of his spiritual teacher with unquestioning reverence; the duty of the subject was passive obedience to rulers; the usages of society were invested with a divine sanction which it was blasphemy to question. To a people so blindly obedient to authority the teaching of European and particularly of English thought, was a revolution. English literature is saturated with the praise of liberty, and it inculcates the duty of private and independent judgment on every man. We have always been taught, and we all believe, that every man should judge for himself, and that no authority can relieve him of the obligation of deciding for himself the great issues of right and wrong. The Indian mind at first revolted at this doctrine. Then one or two here and there were converted to it. They became eager missionaries of the new creed of private judgment and independence, and the conse-

quence is that a new spirit is abroad wherever English education has spread, which questions all established beliefs and calls for orthodoxy, either political, social, economic or religious, to produce its credentials.”

Montagu went on to describe how progressive movements produced a reaction of extreme orthodoxy and opposition to alien influence, whether in the religious, the social or the economic sphere. “Each produces its quota of political unrest, and the counter-movements of those who abominate the new teaching, resent the alterations of the time-honoured social customs, dislike any departure from orthodox religion . . . . All these things together make that curious, differently produced force in India which is known as political unrest.”

“I think”, he said, “we can regard political unrest in India as being but the manifestation of a movement of Indian thought which has been inspired, directly or indirectly, by English ideals, to which the English and the Government of India themselves gave the first impetus. It is constantly being nourished by English education given in Government schools and colleges. In so far as this political unrest is confined to pressing the Government to popularise the Government of the country, so far as the conditions in India will permit, I do not believe that anyone in this House will quarrel with it. You cannot give to the Indians Western education either in Europe or in India and then turn round and refuse to those whom you have educated the right, the scope, or the opportunity to act and think as you have taught them to do. If you do, it seems to me that you must cause another kind of unrest, more dangerous than any other, amongst those bitterly dissatisfied and disappointed with the results of their education . . . . For this reason it seems to me, if I may say so, that the condition of India at the moment is one which, handled well, contains the promise of a complete justification of British rule, handled ill, it is bound to lead to chaos . . . . There have been recently in India manifestations of political unrest with which no one can sympathise, and with regard to which difference of opinion is not legitimate. There have been assassinations and conspiracies to murder; there have been attempts to create hatred against certain sections of His Majesty’s subjects. If this



pernicious unrest were allowed to spread, it would result in widespread misery and anarchy; it would produce a state of things in India which would be more inimical to progress than even the most stringent coercion. It would spread chaos, from which society would seek refuge in a military dictatorship."

Montagu went on to say that the root principle of government in India "ought to be directed towards separating legitimate from illegitimate unrest . . . . His Majesty's Government, acting upon this principle, are determined to arm and to assist the Indian Government in its unflinching war against sedition and illegitimate manifestations of unrest, while it shows an increasingly sympathetic and encouraging attitude towards legitimate aspirations."

This notable speech illustrates the great maturity of Montagu's outlook and his fundamental liberalism. Its contrast between high hopes and grave dangers gives a background to the aspirations and to the tragedies of his period of office as Secretary of State seven years later.

An interesting passage in the speech deals with Indian students in the United Kingdom:

"Let me add one word, addressed not so much to those within these walls as to such audience as I may have outside them. Our efforts cannot bear real fruit unless we have the co-operation of those among whom the lives of Indians are thrown. Many a friendless, sensitive lad looks back, I fear, on the period that he spent in England as one long spell of loneliness and unhappiness. Nothing that the India Office can do will remedy that. The remedy lies in the endeavour of those among whom their lives are spent to overcome insular reticence and prejudices, and to extend a real welcome which, if given in the spirit of true and frank comradeship, and not in patronising tolerance, will meet with warm-hearted reciprocation and will bear fruit of which the giver did not dream."

The section of the speech dealing with the Indian Civil Service, included the following appeal to the universities:

"To those who are going to India to the responsible *tasks* they have chosen I am bold enough to say, mainly because I am fresh from the University and know vividly at what I am hinting, banish as quickly as you can the intolerance of boys and the prejudice of



undergraduates, imbibe the traditions of the great service you are joining, adapt them to modern demands, and go to administer a country in virtue and by the power of the sympathy you can implant in its people. Remember that the best intentions of the Government may be frustrated by the most junior members of the service, called upon, as they are, immediately to assume great responsibilities. I can conceive no more important career than the Indian Civil Service and I would urge that it should be the object of all those who enter it to permit not even the most unfriendly examination to detect any deterioration in the Service.”

After a tribute to the outgoing Viceroy, Lord Minto, Montagu ingeniously concluded his speech by addressing to his successor, Lord Hardinge<sup>4</sup> (then Sir Charles Hardinge), the words addressed by Sir Robert Peel in 1844 to Hardinge’s grandfather:

“If you can keep peace, reduce expenses, extend commerce, and strengthen our hold on India by confidence in our justice and kindness and wisdom, you will be received here on your return with acclaims a thousand times louder, and a welcome infinitely more cordial, than if you had a dozen victories to boast of.”

In November 1910 Montagu, in a speech at Bishop Auckland, again emphasized the need of drawing a line between the healthy and natural growth of aspirations that we ourselves have awakened and the small malignant growth that manifests itself in political crime. He also paid a striking tribute to Ramsay Macdonald’s book *The Awakening of India*.

“I should like”, he said, “to call public attention to an example of the sort of criticism to which no one can object, which does real service to Indian Government, not sparing the faults, but moderate and good-tempered, well-informed and brilliantly vivid. . . . Criticism of this kind never did anything but good. Its effect on the person criticised, if he is an honest man with a well-balanced mind and a sense of humour, will be like that of a cold bath; it may convey

<sup>4</sup> Lord Hardinge (1858-1944), G.C.B., G.C.S.I., G.C.V.O., Viceroy, 1910-16; Ambassador at Paris, 1920-22.

a startling shock for the moment, but its after-effect will be invigorating.”

In November 1910 Morley handed over the Seals of the India Office to Crewe and became Lord President of the Council till he resigned in August 1914 on the outbreak of war. Montagu had a farewell interview with Morley on 3 November 1910, and made a fascinating record.

“Lord Morley sent for me this morning and congratulated me on my speech last night (Bishop-Auckland). He said that it was to his mind comparable to the Budget speech.

“He then explained to me how marvellous he thought this morning’s departure was: this comparatively young fellow Hardinge going off 6000 miles away at the head of a Government of unequalled splendour; seen off by those old stagers Lee-Warner<sup>5</sup> and Hugh Barnes,<sup>6</sup> who themselves had been heads of great provinces with millions of souls in their care, and who know ‘as you and I Montagu, do not know’, what a Viceroy really is. ‘It is a wonderful thing, and no other country has anything to show comparable with it.’

“When Home Rule for Ireland was mentioned in the course of their talk, ‘Is it true’, said I, ‘that you converted Mr. Gladstone to Home Rule?’ ‘No’, said he, ‘how often have I contradicted that’. I had only been in the House of Commons three years when I first entered the Home Rule Cabinet, [in 1881] and I will tell you how it happened. I was writing one Sunday in my house in Wimbledon—the only article I ever wrote for the *Daily News* on the political situation—and I must tell you that I took some journalist pride in it—when I got a telegram bidding me come and see Mr. Gladstone at Carlton House Terrace. I went straight away. Mr. Gladstone said to me as I entered the room: ‘You find me engaged on the very difficult task of forming a Government. Will you be Chief Secretary for Ireland?’ ‘With a seat in the Cabinet?’ I asked. He said ‘Yes’. I replied: ‘As you know I have been

<sup>5</sup> Sir William Lee-Warner (1846-1914), G.C.S.I. Served in the I.C.S. from 1869-95 and was a member of the Secretary of State’s Council, 1902-12.

<sup>6</sup> Sir Hugh Barnes, K.C.S.I., K.C.V.O. was born in 1853. Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, 1900-03 and was also a member of the Secretary of State’s Council, 1908-13.



acting in close personal relations with Mr. Chamberlain for the last three years, and I cannot accept without consulting him.' I do not think Mr. Gladstone was best pleased, but of course he said he had no objection and told me to be back at 6 o'clock.

"I went straight round to Chamberlain's house. Lunch had not been cleared away and I was shown into the room with the empty plates. Joe came down at once. 'I have seen Mr. Gladstone', I said. He said at once in his short sharp way: 'what did he want?'

"'He wants me to be Secretary for Ireland.' I do not know exactly what he replied, but it sounded like 'Damn him!!! That means an out and out Home Rule policy', and then he added: 'you could not respect yourself if you did not accept.'

"There was a dinner party that night at Chamberlain's and I think I stayed the night, but I was back at Mr. Gladstone's at 6 o'clock with seven reasons why I should not accept. He heard them with great impatience, and would hardly let me speak, and then he brushed them all aside and said: 'we shall get on very well together'. As I backed out of the room the old gentleman said in a voice almost broken with emotion or art:

"'Goodbye, Montagu, God bless you.'

N. B. Remarkable directness and force of Chamberlain's advice.

N. B. When I complained that the hall in Bishop Auckland was only a quarter full, and that I attributed it to the fact that it was too big a hall for me to fill: 'I give you five years to fill any hall in the country'."

On 7 November 1910 Morley held his last Council, of which Montagu also left a record: . . . . "The scene was impressive, owing to the undoubted, unequalled achievements of the old gentleman. He was very long, with his usual felicity and accuracy of language."

At the end of his speech, . . . "He described Lord Crewe as assiduous, accurate-minded and careful."

Meanwhile in the Autumn of 1910 Montagu was trying to decide whether to propose marriage to a cousin and took his mother into his confidence. He wrote on 5 September:

"I am very much inclined towards my young cousin [she was a very



young and unsophisticated 19 and Montagu a very old and sophisticated 31] and find it difficult to forget her even here [in Scotland]. But, my dear, be patient with me. I must be sure of myself and her before I do anything. After all, she ought to look round before joining herself to morose old me even *if* I want her and of that I am not quite sure."

The situation was complicated by the fact that Montagu was a very intimate friend of the girl's mother who urged his cause with enthusiasm but was not the best ambassador he could have chosen. "I cannot at present discover", Montagu wrote to his mother, "whether I am thinking about the matter because of my own feelings or because the idea is being so constantly presented to me by some of my people and hers. . . . The trouble is that I can never be sure one way or another. I do not see how one is to, particularly with so young a character." Eventually Montagu proposed and was "definitely and finally" rejected in March 1911. The letter giving this news, also tells his mother that he had promised to go to Lady Sheffield's at Alderley: she was Venetia Stanley's mother. Of Alderley he wrote: "Alderley was quite good fun, altho' the presence of three Hungarian musicians did not help to amuse me much. But the Sheffields are pleasant people."

Montagu's father, who had listened with obvious pride to his Budget speech, died on 12 January 1911 at the age of seventy-nine. While waiting for his father's end, Montagu revealed to a relative how the dread of his own death haunted him. On many occasions he anticipated that his life would be short and his religious belief did not include a belief in survival after death.

Lord Swaythling was a philanthropist and an orthodox Jew. He left over £1 million, but the bequest to Edwin was a life interest and the income was payable only so long as he should profess the Jewish religion. Lord Swaythling's will declared it to be his "earnest wish and solemn injunction that no child of his should at any time or under any circumstances abandon the Jewish religion or intermarry with a person not of the Jewish religion." These provisions were criticised in the *Nation* of 11 March 1911, which provoked a very Chestertonian comment from G. K. Chesterton on 18 March

1911.<sup>7</sup> Lord Swaythling allowed Edwin Montagu £500 a year to enable him to follow a political career; after his father's death, one may assume that Montagu was no longer a poor man, as he had hitherto been. A friend says that he inherited £10,000 a year.

On 26 July 1911, Montagu made his second Indian Budget speech. After dealing with the census, the forthcoming Durbar and the financial position he turned to the political state of India. Referring to political crimes, he said: "Horrible and deplorable as these crimes are in their individual aspect, it is a very common mistake to attach too much importance to isolated occurrences of this sort as indices of the political situation, or to make them the text for long 'jeremiads' in the most exalted journals." He adhered to his optimism.

"What do they mean, these prophets of woe, who shake their heads and say: 'We do not like the news from India; India is in a dangerous state', adding something, as a rule about a Radical Government? . . . . Why all that they mean, so I venture to assert, is that the Indian problem is a difficult one, and a complicated one, becoming as the country develops and its people are educated, increasingly difficult and increasingly complicated . . . . It is all the more reason why we should face the future bravely and thinkingly; all the more reason why we should avoid a mournful pessimism which begets the atmosphere of distrust in which it thrives. The policy of Lord Crewe and Lord Hardinge [the Secretary of State and the Viceroy] was the policy of their predecessors Lord Morley and Lord Minto, 'immovable determination to punish fitly anarchy and crime, with strict sympathy for orderly progressive demand for the peoples that they govern.'"

<sup>7</sup> On 11 March 1911, the *Nation* wrote in a Leader: "Most people will feel the utmost repugnance for such attempts of one generation to limit the spiritual freedom of another." The letter which G. K. Chesterton wrote on 18 March 1911 included the following (and a great deal more to the same effect): "Many Englishmen, and I am one of them, do seriously think that the international and largely secret powers of the great Jewish houses is a problem and a peril. To all this, however, you are indifferent. You allow Jews to be monopolists and wire-pullers, war-makers and strife-breakers, buyers of national honours and sellers of national honour. The one thing, you won't allow Jews to be is Jews."



“India”, Montagu continued, “is changing fast; but political change must translate and interpret social changes. It is not enough to admire and envy Western political institutions. They cannot be imported ready-made; they must be acquired as the fitting expression of indigenous social conditions”. . . . “The time is not ripe for any further modification of the system of Government.” As a prior step, “Indians must turn their attention to organising an industrial population which can reap the agricultural and industrial wealth of the country, and attain a higher level of education and a higher standard of living.”

He concluded his long speech as follows:

“There are those who, filled with an ante-diluvian imperialism, cannot see beyond domination and subjection, beyond governor and governed, who hate the word ‘progress’ and will accuse me of encouraging unrest. I bow in anticipation. I believe there is nothing dangerous in what I have said. I have pointed a long path, a path perhaps of centuries, for Englishmen and Indians to travel together. I ask the minority in India to bring along it in the widest sense, by organisation and by precept, all those who would be good citizens of their country. And when at intervals this well-ordered thought shows us that they have made social and political advance to another stage, and demand from us, in the name of the responsibility we have accepted, that they should be allowed still further to share that responsibility with us, I hope we shall be ready to answer with knowledge and with prudence. In this labour all parties and all interested, wherever they may be, may rest assured of the sympathy and assistance of the Government.”

During 1911 Montagu, having failed to obtain a wife and a home of his own, paid a succession of visits to the country houses of his friends. In the spring, besides visiting the Sheffields at Alderley, he stayed with the Asquiths in Scotland. The party included “the P. M., his wife and two daughters, Raymond Asquith, Harold Baker, M. P., Watt [who was painting the Prime Minister], Bebb Asquith and his wife, Gwendoline Churchill, Birrell, Humphrey Paul (whom I don’t like) are expected to-day.”

Visits in the summer included the Sheffields at their house at Holyhead in July where Montagu found the family, Mrs. Henley,



Mr. and Mrs. Asquith and Winston Churchill, but Montagu said: "I feel very out of it all." He visited the Sheffields again at Alderley in September, and other visits were to Mrs. Graham Smith at Malmesbury, Lord and Lady Crewe at Crewe Hall, the Asquiths again in Scotland and his grouse-shooting friends in Scotland. Montagu enjoyed this visit to the Asquiths. He wrote to his mother: "The Asquiths was great fun and the Prime Minister's birthday on Wed. was awful good fun. You would have laughed to see the P. M. and Birrell playing musical chairs with lots of young ladies." He went to tea with A. J. B. "AJB took me round the garden and talked to me of the British Ass: and the threatened exhaustion of coal which he said had haunted him since he was a boy. . . The next day we went to see Lord Wemyss at Gosford. He is only 94 and so vigorous that I think he will be alive after coal has gone. He treats his son Elcho, a grandfather of over 60, like a schoolboy."

In January 1912 Montagu went with Asquith on a holiday to Sicily. He enjoyed the company of Asquith. "The Prime Minister is in the best of spirits and is the best of company, full of stories of Gladstone and old times and of character sketches of famous people. I wish I could remember them." But six days later he wrote from Palermo:

"I can't say this is being an unqualified success. It is true that I have had five days of great enjoyment with the Prime. He is the best company. The most easily amused and the greatest fund of information I know. Our tête-a-tête has been destroyed this morning by the arrival of Violet and Venetia; it is true that this hotel is quite comfortable (cooking bad) and beautifully situated on the most gorgeous bay in the world; it is true that the scenery is more than lovely and the weather divine; but I get no exercise, the air is never at all bracing and I loathe Baedeker, Thucydides and sightseeing."

Having had summer sunshine in January 1912 Montagu had a winter holiday in Switzerland in June. He slept two nights above the snow-line. The weather was vile and he found no rare birds' eggs. "But its been glorious and very new to me."

On 28 February 1912 Montagu delivered a long speech as President of the Cambridge Liberal Club. He elaborated on the thesis that “the Empire, as we know it, and the ideal which it fulfils, is the production of the Liberal Party.” Having duly dealt with Canada and South Africa, he turned to India and to Lord Curzon’s partition of Bengal. He paid a tribute to Curzon’s work in India, but how had he spent his time since? “Admiring what he has done, not looking and saying, ‘We have done this’, but saying, ‘This is my work’. It is not ‘Hands off India’ which he preaches: it is ‘leave Curzonian India as Lord Curzon left it’ . . . These are not the grave and weighty criticisms of a statesman; they are the impetuous, angry fault-findings of a man thinking primarily of himself.” Thus early began the duel with Curzon in which Montagu suffered defeat ten years later.

In June 1912 trouble arose as follows. Montagu in his speech at Cambridge had quoted a paragraph about constitutional reform in a despatch of 25 August 1911 from the Viceroy (Lord Hardinge) which read as follows: “The only possible solution would appear to be gradually to give the Provinces a larger measure of self-government until at last India would consist of a number of administrations, autonomous in all provincial affairs, with the Government of India above them all, and possessing power to interfere in cases of misgovernment, but ordinarily restricting its functions to matters of Imperial concern” (Cd 5979, page 7.) This despatch, which dealt with the proposed transfer of the capital from Calcutta to Delhi, had been published in December 1911. It had been hailed by Indian Nationalists as a declaration in favour of Home Rule for India and in the House of Lords in February 1912 Curzon and Lansdowne had accused the Government of contemplating federal Home Rule in India. Crewe had assured the House that nothing of the kind was intended. But Montagu had taken a different line in his speech at Cambridge on 28 February. “That statement”, he had said, “shows the goal, the aim towards which we propose to work—not immediately, not in a hurry, but gradually.” “We cannot drift on for ever without stating a policy”, Montagu had said. He had pointed out that a new generation had grown up in India which asked “What are you going to do with us?” The extremists had published their proposals for Swaraj; “the moderates”, Montagu had said, “look to us to say what lines our future policy



is to take. We have never answered that and we have put off answering them far too long. At last and not too soon, a Viceroy has had the courage to state the trend of British policy in India and the lines on which we propose to advance.”

This speech by Montagu had inevitably revived the controversy. On 22 April 1912 Bonar Law in the House of Commons pointed out the discrepancy between Crewe’s and Montagu’s interpretation of the Despatch. Montagu had replied that there was no such discrepancy, but went on to say that, when others were advocating their own ideals, it was not out of place to show the people of India that there was a direction in which the British occupation was tending, “some definite aim and object”, and that they were in India not merely to administrate, but to develop India on a plan.

Inevitably Curzon raised the topic in the House of Lords on 24 June 1912 and referred to the Nationalists’ interpretation of the Despatch which Crewe had denied and Montagu had twice confirmed. Crewe repeated his denial and stated emphatically that he saw no future for India on the lines of colonial self-government.<sup>8</sup>

Thus Montagu had been mercilessly snubbed by his Chief and on 24 June he sent an immediate protest in the following terms:

“ Lord Crewe,

“ I hope you will be patient while I express my dismay at the report in to-day’s *Times* of the debate yesterday.

“ I am more than unhappy because I have always hoped that even if I did let you down you would be certain in public to come to my assistance. That is an incentive to do his best which any member of the Government however subordinate must feel.

“ I am not concerned now to argue that my interpretation of the passage in dispute is accurate. History will judge the importance to Indian policy of the words as printed and published. I am rather inclined to believe that we are in agreement as to the matter.

“ I have never said one word as to federalism and indeed I contrasted at Cambridge our ideals with B. Pal’s<sup>9</sup> ideal of colonial self-government. I do not think therefore it would have been difficult to say what you did say with some protecting words for

<sup>8</sup> I owe my description of this incident to an unpublished thesis by my friend Dr. Mehrotra.

<sup>9</sup> Indian extremist, follower of Tilak.



me. As made, however, I submit respectfully that your speech will be construed to mean that I have been thrown over and that hurts."

"(Sd) E.S.M. 26/6/12"

Montagu followed this up by a letter on 28 June 1912: "Time does not diminish the dismay. I hate to be acclaimed as the friend of the extremists or to be told that I have been over-ruled."

In the House of Lords on 29 July 1912 Lord Crewe warmly denied that there was any difference between the views of the Government of India, Montagu or himself. The policy of all of them was: "The supremacy of British rule in India, because maintenance of British rule was the best method of securing the happiness of the people of India . . . . Was it conceivable that at any time the Indian Empire could succeed on the lines, say, of Australia or New Zealand?"

How wisely did Lord Courtney conclude the debate by saying that "no one could pretend to pronounce a final judgment in regard to the future of India and of the Asiatic races."

Montagu's third Indian Budget speech on 2 August 1912 dealt mainly with education—the education of Indian students in the United Kingdom and of primary, secondary and university education in India. He made a special appeal to British undergraduates:

"A responsibility of a special kind falls upon them. Amongst those who go to our universities, both Indian and British, are the future administrators of India, and if we allow our Indian visitors to be segregated, isolated and rudely treated, we are sowing seed which will sprout and fruit long after we have repented of the carelessness which helped its germination."

He concluded by two warnings:

"To embark on a policy of reaction would be a calamity-producing blunder. The man who expresses a confident opinion about India, based on knowledge, however intimate, or on work, however admirable, but a few years out of date, is a man whose advice must not be accepted without question. We must move forward cautiously; nobody can possibly foretell what will be the eventual characteristics of the population we shall form in India; the India which must be a heritage, not of its Asiatic population alone, but also of

the small handful of Europeans who have unified it, giving it its trend, brought to it its traditions and its ideals, and which must be reckoned in its destinies.”

The speech “was”—said the *Times*—“a lengthy performance read in slow and laboured fashion from closely written manuscript. But, if the manner left something to be desired, the matter was magnificent.”

Montagu longed to see India for himself and obtained Lord Crewe’s assent to his taking the unprecedented course of paying a six months visit from October 1912 to March 1913.

Not only did Montagu keep a full and detailed Diary, which his mother read aloud to the family assembled on Friday evenings, but he also wrote at least fifty letters by each mail, including always a letter to his mother with affectionate messages to his family and to Rosie. He told his mother that he never dreamed India would be so interesting and that he felt more than ever determined to stick to it throughout life, though sometimes the newspapers with news of the House of Commons made him feel very homesick. He described living in tents in the jungle, “surrounded by a veritable zoological garden of birds and beasts.” His journey did not become less wonderful and exciting as time went on, but increased in interest. He believed, too, that his visit was greatly appreciated and that he was doing good.

As his visit drew to a close, he looked forward to future visits to India. At the end he wrote:

“I really believe I have made hosts of friends and, in learning, I have shown people so clearly that the India Office is not always intangible and unsympathetic that I have really done good. But, alas, seeing what should be done is one thing. The impenetrable obstacles of a second in command of machinery devised, oh so successfully, to prevent change are horrible. Still I am going to try.”

The Diary which he kept forms the basis of part II of this volume.

But despite Montagu’s intense interest in India, he was growing impatient for promotion to Cabinet rank and feared that his absence in India might cause him to be passed over. On 22 August 1912 Margot Asquith wrote to him: “What I think you should look at is



politics as a whole and your own age—your ambition is alright, but at the age of thirty-four you can hardly expect to jump at once. I know you feel older, but that is the fact.” The same letter reminded Montagu that “those you talk to are quite as deeply interested in themselves as you are, but they disguise it better. I’ve never found you the least hysterical, only a little hyper-keen and sensitive, and I love this, but it unfits one for a few things.”

During Montagu’s absence the India Office sensibly decided to break the ring which was combining to keep up the price paid by the Government of India for silver by employing Messrs. Samuel Montagu to make the purchases discreetly at a reasonable price. It was, perhaps naturally, alleged that Montagu as Under Secretary had corruptly given the business to his family firm. The “Marconi Scandal” of 1911 had no doubt pre-disposed people to make accusations of this kind. In fact the Government had no difficulty in showing the baselessness of the charge, since Montagu had no connection with the firm of Samuel Montagu, and in the India Office he had never been concerned with the technical questions of currency and exchange dealt with by the Finance Department. But Montagu was very sensitive and all too ready to despond. In his diary he wrote:

“Meerut. Dec. 4th 1912. I am bound to write a note on the fact that each English mail at present makes me shudder with only too well-justified apprehension about the ‘Silver Scandal’. I am driven to regret my visit to India altogether, and feel very isolated. It is not only what people write, but the fact that they do not write at all (not a single member of the House of Commons—not a single Downing Street man or woman) makes me feel as though even those in England who do not believe in the corruption charges, think it ought not to have happened, and that any defence that I knew nothing of it shows, as I suppose it does, a culpably limited interest in India Office work. The only alternative would seem that, because I am the brother of my brother and the son of my father, there is no room for me in politics. A desperate desire to rush home aimlessly and to curse desperately has been conquered; but I am lastingly depressed by the silence of my friends and the perverseness of Liberal newspapers. The bright and grateful feature is the splendid sympathy of the Secretary of State and the



whole Office. It will, I fear, colour the future and limit any possibilities for good work I may possess.”

Montagu did not realise that, once the bubble had been pricked and it had been proved that there had been no scandal at all, the whole affair would soon blow over. On the contrary he regarded it as fatal to his career, since he could not hope for promotion or removal from the India Office, which would look like removing the corrupt. “A fine wave of Anti-Semitism results and Jews in the Liberal Party will be at a discount. Poor me, with Samuel and Isaacs ahead of me.” Montagu wanted to prosecute the *New Witness* for libel, but this his family declined to do.

Montagu’s friends did their best to cheer him: on Christmas Day, 1912, Venetia Stanley wrote:

“I can’t bear the idea that you should think for an instant, that anyone who knows you at all has *ever* imagined that you were remotely responsible for anything that has occurred lately. Everyone knows that you have nothing and would have nothing to say or do in the matter. It’s horrible not having any letters (tho’ by the time you get this you will probably have had two from Violet, I know, and several from Margot).”

Lady Dorothy Howard wrote even more forcibly:

“Are you an old donkey or has the sun hurt you, or have you only not taken enough exercise, that you write me so gloomy a screed? I don’t really believe you can think so horribly badly of your friends and colleagues as to think that they have been callous—let alone credulous—whilst guttersnipes have chirped out their nasty cries! Outsiders have shrugged shoulders and disbelieved and said, ‘Just like politicians to throw mud at each other.’ Insiders have been furious and stamped on the faces of the guttersnipes.”

In his fourth Indian Budget speech on 8 August 1913, Montagu once more stated the Government’s policy on constitutional Reforms.

“We are pledged to advance, and we mean to advance, but it must be steadily and prudently. Mere lip-service to a formula is worthless, I wish to appeal, to British and Indian alike, to make this

co-operation a real thing by inspiring it with the vital elements of tact, sympathy and sincerity—the instruments of success in India . . . .

“There are in India millions, tens of millions, I might almost say hundreds of millions, who do not, cannot, and probably never will aspire to a share in the Government of their country, who live the life of an Oriental, unstirred by the Western life we have imported. We measure their lands, we administer justice to them, we teach them to keep themselves, their houses and their villages clean; we show them how plague may be avoided, and we bring to bear on their material improvement all the resources of Western science and civilisation. But all this is to them but as a phase, passing in a maze and murmur of words, in the eternal scheme of things. The Indian of whom I speak has a view of life which is not our view. His ways are not our ways; our books, our medicine, our sanitation are as mysterious to him as the rites of Shiva or of Vishnu to the average middle-class Londoner. The language of officialdom booms in his ears and stupefies him: he is entangled and trapped and terrified in the coils and meshes of official codes. He is, in spite of all our Western importations, the same man as he was 15 centuries ago. What I ask is, that where the machinery, with all its complications and intricacies, suited to the 20th century comes into contact with the fifth century, let every effort be made to simplify, to adjust and to explain. Understanding is what is wanted. Understanding is impossible unless the officer who meets the people in direct contact has the time to see and talk to them face to face in the liberty, the freedom, to adjust and to lighten their difficulties and to ease their conditions by the intervention of his personal agency and sympathy, and so my last word is a plea for devolution. If we make co-operation and devolution our guiding principles, I am sure we are on the right lines.”

Montagu was satisfied with the speech and thought it better than the previous year's Budget speech, but was a little disappointed at its reception in the Press. He was congratulated on the speech by Winston Churchill and Birrell. “The P. M. rather sleepy, but he listened to most of it. Bonar Law very flattering also Birrell.”

Before Montagu went to India, his mother had, in February 1912, urged him to marry. He replied:



"I fear it can't be done. It is not only that I don't as a rule like Jewesses. It is also that I firmly believe to look for a wife in one set of people is as wrong as it would be to say you must look for a wife among blue-eyed women. . . . But I think you will agree it is time I had a house of my own and if I can learn from Gilbert and Louis just how I stand, I think I shall take one."

He took a lease of 24 Queen Anne's Gate, an eighteenth century house of character, but no special distinction, and lived there for ten years.

After Montagu's return from India in April 1913, he complained once more to his mother of "the loneliness which is driving me mad." His mother again urged him to marry—he was now thirty-four— but he replied: "If it had not been for my father's wishes, I should have married long ago and now, God bless her, [be] very, very happy. . . . I feel it would be wicked to choose a wife because of my father's will or any Jewish woman whom I did not love as I have loved. And I have never yet, though I have tried desperately, found one such."

What Montagu did not tell his mother was that he was falling very deeply in love with Venetia Stanley, the daughter of Lord Sheffield. Montagu came to know Venetia Stanley, since she was a close friend both of Violet Asquith, her contemporary, and of Mr. Asquith. At first, according to Montagu's account, he loathed her, then he was frightened of her; by 1911 he adored her, met her frequently in London, Alderley or Holyhead (where the Sheffields had country seats) and wrote to her almost daily when they were separated. For Christmas 1911 he tried to find something special and personal to give her as a present "to express our relationship as I understand it." At this stage of the relationship a letter no longer begins "Dear Miss Stanley" but "My dear Venetia, (I have somehow slipped into addressing you by the most beautiful name in the world, which happens to be yours)—if you dislike it, you will of course, some time or other, say so (please don't)."

In January 1912 when Montagu went on a holiday to Sicily with Mr. Asquith, he greatly enjoyed the tête-a-tête and was at first sorry when they were joined by Violet and Venetia. But after their return Montagu confessed to Venetia: "Sicily has spoiled me.



I miss you tremendously the days I can't see you. I wonder how much you realise this."

But at this stage, much as Edwin Montagu had come to adore Venetia, Venetia did not adore Edwin; Mr. Asquith held first place in her affection, though she found both the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister's Ex-Private Secretary fun to talk to. This was a favourite criterion. A pen-portrait records of her:

"If asked whether she had any guiding principle, she would in some moods declare that it was to get the 'maximum of fun' out of life. In other moods, perhaps more often, she was inclined to doubt whether (in the words of a friend) 'the query was worth the quest.' She was preserved from cynicism, and from living at haphazard by the native energy of a healthy temperament, and by a capacity for real devotion where she really cared."

In July 1912 Montagu asked Venetia to marry him. At first she refused to consider it at all, for she could not feel that she was in love with him in the way that he was in love with her. Then she relented and Montagu was blissfully happy, till Venetia changed her mind and refused to marry him, but offered to remain his friend. Montagu refused to give up hope, and again and again he implored her to change her mind, but he had met with no success when he sailed for India in October 1912. Montagu and Venetia corresponded regularly and cordially during his absence and after his return in April 1913, though sometimes Montagu found very trying "the position of lavishing hopelessly affection where it is not wanted."

Meanwhile politics remained an absorbing interest. In September 1913 Montagu spent a week-end on the Admiralty yacht "Enchantress" with Asquith, Lloyd George, Runciman, Winston Churchill and Seely. "The political outlook is very difficult", Montagu wrote—the Home Rule problem still seeming insoluble.

## CHAPTER IV

### *Financial Secretary and Cabinet (1914-1915)*

Aet. 35 to 36

DESPITE MONTAGU'S intense interest in India, he was disappointed that promotion did not come his way; Vaughan Nash wrote to him in October 1911: "I don't see why you need take such a gloomy view of your incarceration at the I.O., as if it were a life sentence." Montagu was obsessed by the idea that he was left at the India Office because no one wanted him and, though deeply interested in India, he longed for the power to do something for India, and not merely make speeches. "The years as they go on", he wrote to Venetia, "make things grow worse and more dismal . . . . I remain, and I fear for ever, a celibate, boycotted, unused, USS of S for India." Montagu complained that no one asked him to speak at by-elections, but in December 1913 he spoke at Stourbridge, Rugeley and Preston, besides six meetings in Cambridge.

Promotion came after Montagu had been at the India Office four years. In February 1914 he was appointed Financial Secretary to the Treasury. In March 1914, soon after he went to the Treasury, Margot Asquith asked Lloyd George, "How do you like my friend?" He replied "Oh very much, he has got excellent brains and he should get on well. I think he looks happy. Is he?" "Very happy", Margot said, "He has such a glorious sense of humour and is *so* keen and industrious. I love him, as I told you, so am glad you like him."

Montagu found the work at the Treasury lasted sixteen to seventeen hours a day, but at first he enjoyed it, until he became exhausted. By June he was miserable because the Government had so much legislation to pass and no time available. "I was sent to the Treasury to prevent this sort of thing and I have failed."

Montagu often disclaimed any special aptitude for finance. He wrote to Chelmsford, for example, in February 1919:

"There never was anything more fraudulent in all public reputa-



tions than the reputation which is the only one ever given to me, for financial ability. I was designated for the Treasury at an early stage of my political life because there is a public opinion which I cannot correct, and which haunts me still, that I was once in the City. On that pretence I obtained as it were a forged passport into the conclave of City men, and when in the Treasury I behaved as all Financial Secretaries do, clutching at the economic advice given me by Civil Servants and spending my time in saying 'You must not' to angry Government Departments who wanted six-pence to spend."

Technical questions of currency and exchange did not especially interest Montagu, but to major questions of financial policy he gave much thought and was well regarded by the City fathers.

Before the outbreak of war in 1914 Montagu was primarily interested, not in Treasury questions, but in the future of the Liberal Party and in the political questions of the day. Foremost among these was the question of Home Rule for Ireland. At this time, (April 1914), Montagu was in favour of a Federation between Southern Ireland and Ulster after a fixed time limit, thus giving a guarantee to Southern Ireland that Ulster would not be permanently excluded.

But no settlement was reached. Passions were so worked up that the leaders on either side (Carson and Redmond) had made it very difficult for concessions to be made. In an attempt to avoid Civil War, secret negotiations were undertaken by Montagu, Lord Rothermere and Lord Murray of Elibank to bring the two sides together. The negotiations lasted from 25 June to 29 June 1914; they failed—as the Speaker's Buckingham Palace Conference afterwards failed—because no agreement could be reached on the question of including or excluding Fermanagh, Armagh, Tyrone and Derry.

The first meeting of Montagu, Rothermere and Murray was at Claridges on 24 June. "Rothermere had seen Bonar Law [Colonial Secretary and Tory Leader] recently and learned of him that it was only in the last three weeks that he had persuaded Lansdowne [Conservative Leader in the Lords] that Home Rule was inevitable." It seemed to Montagu that Murray "ignored the great difficulties of coercing Irish Nationalists or of voting them down" and advised



him to see them. Montagu had no doubt in his own mind that Bonar Law and Carson were both anxious to settle: Carson was very anxious about 12 July and his power of controlling the Ulster Volunteers was very doubtful. The next day, 25 June Montagu saw the Prime Minister who authorised him to go ahead.

On 27 June 1914 Rothermere lunched with Montagu and reported that he had seen Carson and Bonar Law. "Bonar Law will support any reasonable settlement with Carson, even to the smashing of the Tory Party—and his own political life,—hinted that he would see the Government through, if the Irish kicked, even to taking office under Asquith."

But there was strong Tory opposition to a settlement, which would be a triumph for the Liberal Government. Plans for a Tory Government included Bonar Law as Prime Minister, F. E. Smith as First Lord of the Admiralty and Lansdowne at the Foreign Office. "All anxious to shelve Curzon whom they hate and distrust."

Carson would not take office at all; he would go abroad with his new wife—"Doesn't want executive office—realising that he has been guilty of illegalities and can't therefore take a law office at all."

At this time Birrell told Montagu that he constantly heard of Carson saying that he knows the P.M. in the Law Courts—"he never pulls his stroke through and will climb down in the end." Carson at this point had told Rothermere: "The Government will learn wisdom when, a few days after we move, the big banks in London begin putting up their shutters," and later Carson said: "I know that within a week of our moving, the Government will concede in panic all that we ask for now and perhaps a great deal more."

This was certainly the most curious of Civil Wars. Bonar Law told Rothermere that the plan was all arranged "to take the six counties before Asquith goes to the King—at once or before July 12th. They think that by swiftness they can do it without bloodshed, but that, even if there is bloodshed, the Army won't move. If anything of this kind happens, settlement is impossible and Election disastrous. Hence Bonar Law's anxiety."

Montagu's comment was: "So the whole matter is resolved into the insoluble question of Tyrone and Fermanagh. Surely, as Alec [Murray] says, England won't fight about this. Yet it seems awfully impossible to find a solution."

Asquith's comment was that he had always anticipated that the trouble really was one of Tyrone and Fermanagh. He had nothing to suggest. He agreed that Irish affairs must be settled before any question of any possible Autumn holiday.

The Kaiser found a solution, for the First World War began on 4 August 1914 and there was a truce in the Irish quarrel.

On the day of the declaration of War by Austria (28 July 1914), Montagu collected a number of financial and business men to meet Lloyd George at lunch to discuss the situation.<sup>1</sup> On 31 July 1914 the Governor of the Bank of England requested authority to issue notes in excess of the limit prescribed by the Act of 1844, and I remember taking from the Treasury to the Bank the Chancellor's authorisation based on the precedents of 1847, 1857 and 1866.

Emergency measures were devised by a conference of Ministers, officials, bankers and traders which sat all day and much of the night from 31 July to 6 August 1914. Montagu was present at these conferences.

"My position", he told his mother on 2 August "is only that of scullery maid to the Government and the City. Panic follows panic, foreign office telegrams come hourly, hopes vanish and revive only to be dashed again—nothing but blackness ahead. I am only concerned with the unromantic side of war, but my side is by no means the least important and on it really depends the continued existence of our country after the war."

On the introduction in the House of Commons of the comparatively mild Budget of November 1914 Montagu replied to points raised in the debate on behalf of the Chancellor of the Exchequer; e.g., he announced a rise in the pay of junior officers. But there was little opposition or the opportunity for the display of debating skill.

Amid all his preoccupations Montagu found time to bring what consolation he could to the German nurse, Rosie Riedel, who had brought him up. "I was very touched", she wrote in August 1914, "by your more than kind letter to me and thank you with all my heart for your sympathy. It is indeed a great comfort to me in this time of trouble and anxiety to know I have so many kind friends to feel for me."

<sup>1</sup> Lloyd George's *War Memoirs*, p. 103.



In the New Year's Honours on 1 January 1915 Montagu was made a Privy Councillor. On 4 February 1915 he was appointed Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster and became a Cabinet Minister at the age of thirty-six. Montagu had mixed feelings about his promotion. He believed that his leaving the Treasury was the result of a plot by Lloyd George. "So I go into the Cabinet", he wrote to Venetia, "with a conviction that I am deserting my post, pushed therefrom by the man I have slaved for for a year, whom I thought trusted and liked me, and execrated by those who will see in me the greedy supplanter of Masterman" [His predecessor at the Duchy]. Montagu hoped, however, that by his work at the Duchy he would earn the fulfilment of his real ambition—the Viceroyalty of India. Venetia told him that he need not suspect a plot for Mr. Asquith was very fond of him and had wanted to have him in the Cabinet for some time.

The departmental duties of the post are very light, and thus Montagu was available for non-departmental duties. His first task in February 1915 was to accompany Lloyd George, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Lord Cunliffe, the Governor of the Bank, to a conference at Paris with the French and Russian Ministers of Finance (M. Ribot and M. Bark), at which it was agreed that the United Kingdom, France and Russia should share equally the burden of loans to the Minor Allies. During this visit to Paris the new Chief of Staff, Sir William Robertson, made a deep impression on Lloyd George, Montagu and the Governor of the Bank.

The post of Chancellor of the Duchy was regarded as an interim step to higher office and Montagu evidently raised the question of his next move with Asquith, probably indicating his desire to be made Viceroy of India in succession to Lord Hardinge. Asquith sent an affectionate, but non-committal reply, outlining changes in Ireland and elsewhere and ending, "And who is to do Education, I suppose there is nothing you would loathe more?"

Meanwhile Montagu was overwhelmed with work. On 20 March 1915 he wrote to his mother:

"I have never been worked so hard in all my life, not even in the first weeks of war. I have the Cabinet, three Cabinet Committees, my own two offices, the labour and contracts thing with George and Runciman. I have been here [Treasury Chambers] all day



for four days on that, doing other work all night and Acland is ill, so I am also doing my old job. I am, however, fairly well."

From this time onwards Montagu's most important task was in connection with the supply of munitions. The War Office were convinced that orders must be placed only with the armament firms with whom they had dealt in the past, since these alone would produce reliable munitions. This view was contested by Lloyd George, who rightly argued that by this method the immense quantities required would never be obtainable.

On 22 March 1915 it was decided to set up a Committee and Asquith wrote to Lloyd George: "I am disposed to think that (on the political side) in addition to yourself and A. J. B. [Balfour] you should have a working financier, such as Montagu." The Committee was, according to Lloyd George's *Memoirs*, a failure, as it did not meet till 12 April 1915 and only held five further meetings before the change of Government, when the work was taken over by the Ministry of Munitions. In recording the appointment of this Committee Lord Beaverbrook pays a notable tribute to Montagu:

"Montagu's abilities were extraordinary. He became the hope of Liberalism, the visible successor of Lord Rosebery, at almost too early an age for the hope of the morning to last into the afternoon. At twenty he had almost ceased to be young; at thirty he was middle-aged; at forty he represented a maturity of judgment which accompanies real age. Unrivalled in his mental equipment, he seemed to lack the courage to take the responsibility for his own projects, sound as they invariably were, and as a consequence tougher men reaped where he had sown. His early death was an irreparable loss to the State in this dreadful age of mediocrities."<sup>2</sup>

Montagu held his post as Chancellor of the Duchy for less than four months. At the end of May 1915 the Liberal Government was replaced by the Asquith Coalition. The immediate cause was the resignation of Fisher, the First Sea Lord, and the Unionist determination to turn out Sir Winston Churchill from the Admiralty. Lloyd George has described how the decision to form a Coalition Government resulted from a talk of less than a quarter

<sup>2</sup>*Politicians and the War*, vol. I.

of an hour between Asquith, Bonar Law and Lloyd George. The allocation of Offices, on the other hand, was a lengthy process. Eventually Montagu returned to the position of Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Sir Winston Churchill succeeding him as Chancellor of the Duchy (till November 1915).

Since Venetia Stanley had refused to marry Montagu in July 1912 he had never ceased to urge her to change her mind. He re-inforced his pleas by reading her Robert Browning's poem "The Statue and the Bust", the theme of which is the tragedy of lost opportunity. At last in April 1915 Venetia told him that after long years' consideration she was willing to marry him and to go through the form of conversion to Judaism in order to avoid paining his mother and forfeiting the large income which he received under his father's will.

Venetia, while she found the arrangement distasteful, agreed to it as the line of least resistance. She was essentially a pagan. "She had", it is recorded, "no 'sense of sin'; no penitential moods; no waves of remorse: no mystic reveries." She regarded loving and helping her friends as more important than any high moral principles.

Montagu refused to admit that the arrangement was a dishonest device with the only object of retaining his substantial income. An agnostic marrying a Christian would normally be married in Church, and it was equally normal for an agnostic marrying a Jew to be married in Synagogue: a woman marrying a Frenchman would naturally become a Frenchwoman and a woman marrying a Jew naturally became a Jewess. Montagu told Venetia that, as regards their children, he was in favour of no religious teaching. Their children would be born Jews, but if they wanted to practice a religion, they could choose their own. He would not try to influence them nor criticise them if they married Christians or Hindus, though in fact he would be glad if they married Jews.

In reply Venetia made her position chrystal clear. She wrote:

"Were I to be washed 1000 times in the water of Jordan and to go through every rite and ceremony that the strictest Jewish creed involves, I should not feel I had changed my race or nationality. I go through the formula required because you want it for your



mother's sake and also (I am going to be quite honest) because I think one is happier rich than poor. (Don't forget, though, that I am sure I can be quite as happy with you if you have nothing.) You also say that if your sons were to wish to marry Christians you would feel they had also deserted. Is it race or religion you care about, or merely the label? If race, then you are debasing it by marrying me, whatever I do. Religion you know I care nothing about and shan't attempt to bring up my children in. There only remains the label. And will that stick, do you think? If we have children, how do you think they will be brought up? Amongst Jews or amongst Christians? Won't their natural friends be Arthur's children, Anthony's Geoffrey's, and not your eldest brother's or any of your relations. And this is not because I shall be separating you from your family, because you have never really belonged to them by ties or friendship, except your mother and one brother. . . . I shall nominally call myself one of you, but that is the limit of what will happen and I am sure your children will not regard themselves as anything different from their friends."

The worst of the difficulties which they had to face was their feeling that their engagement would be a cause of great unhappiness to Mr. Asquith, to whom they were both greatly devoted. For the past three years Venetia's devotion to Mr. Asquith had come to mean a great deal to him and Venetia's engagement was bound to be a cause of sorrow. Venetia courageously told him the news and Asquith wrote to her "a wonderful letter which shows me how wrong I was to think that he only thought of his own happiness and never of mine." Montagu could not bring himself to talk to Mr. Asquith about Venetia for two or three weeks, but when he at last did so, Mr. Asquith "was just too noble and splendid for words."

But now a new trouble arose. Venetia, without consulting Montagu, promised to nurse in a War Hospital at Wimereux near Boulogne under Sir Henry and Lady Norman from 20 May 1915 for at least a month. Venetia, with her aversion from high moral principles, did not ascribe her decision to patriotism, but said that she wanted to have "first hand experience of what the conditions are like not 60 miles from a vast war."

Montagu and Venetia wrote to each other daily for seven weeks.



Montagu's letters repeat over and over again his passionate love for Venetia and his resolve to devote his life to making her happy. He cannot understand Venetia's apparent regard of marriage with him as so little urgent and important, but does his best to refrain from rebuking her; he implores her to continue to write daily, as he lives for her letters and is plunged in despair if no letter arrives: he is terrified that Venetia will find that she no longer loves him, eccentric, morose and gloomy as he is; he tells her with whom he lunches and dines and plays bridge, he gives an uncensored account of the trip to Brighton when they all drank too much and Diana Cooper broke her ankle when they went for a bathe at 3 A.M. (as described in *The Rainbow comes and goes*, pp. 138-39); he briefly relates "Winston is learning to paint in oils!!!" and he describes all his passing moods of despondency, his illnesses and his overwork. Venetia's letters are briefer and, though she does not forget to reassure him how much she misses him, the letters are mostly a diary—the outings which are fun, the hospital life which is dreary, the days when she is bored and the days when the sun shines and she is happy. It puzzles and amuses her to find that her moods vary so, and that sometimes she likes being a nurse and often hates it; she never takes Life or herself quite seriously.

For a long while Venetia would not fix a date for her return, she reduced Montagu to despair by suggesting that she would move to a hospital near the Front at Hazebrouk, but eventually, after a brief visit from Montagu on 24 June she agreed to return on 10 July 1915, to go through the ceremony of becoming a Jewess, to meet Montagu's mother and to get married on 26 July.

After Venetia's return she went to Alderley Park and from there she wrote to Edwin:

"I spoke to father and he was very sweet to me, in spite of his great distaste for the whole thing. I told him we thought of being married on the 26th [July 1915]. Papa has made me put my whole vast fortune into settlement so we shan't be able to speculate with it as freely as I'd hoped, or at all! . . . . He is in excellent spirits and now that he has got over his disagreeable interview quite delicious to me. He hates these personal conversations quite as much as I do."

The ceremony of marriage according to Jewish ritual took place

at 28 Kensington Court, the house of Edwin Montagu's elder brother, the second Lord Swaythling.

There is a valuable glimpse of Montagu at this period of his life in the Memoirs of Duff Cooper [Lord Norwich] and Diana Manners, who had married Duff Cooper. In *Old Men Forget*, Duff Cooper wrote:

"Although the society in which I moved [in 1915-16] was gay, it was neither shallow nor entirely frivolous, and it was closely concerned with the conduct of the War. It was during those years that I became a friend of Edwin Montagu, who in 1915 married Venetia Stanley. Their home in Queen Anne's Gate [no. 24] and their country house in Norfolk [Breccles Hall] became and remained for me throughout their lives ever-open havens of hospitality.

"He was a man whose ugliness was obliterated by his charm. He had a huge, ungainly body, a deep, soft voice and dark eyes that sparkled with humour and kindness. He loved the open-air life—a rare thing in men of his race—he had a great knowledge of ornithology and was happiest shooting or merely watching wild birds on the Norfolk Broads. This taste was a link between him and Edward Grey, who was often in his house. He was very nervous and absurdly pessimistic. Whenever he talked about the future he would interject 'But of course, I shall be dead by then', and he did die at the age of 45."

Duff Cooper also tells of a dinner which Alan Parsons and his wife, Viola, daughter of Sir Herbert Tree, gave, with much trepidation, to Asquith, Montagu and the Duff Coopers.

"Viola and Alan had the Prime Minister and Edwin Montagu to dinner besides us. They were very nervous about the success of the evening and had taken great pains, bless their hearts. There was special food and special wine, but at first Alan could only grunt from shyness and Viola only moan. However, contrary to their expectations, it proved a brilliant success. The food was excellent, the conversation never flagged, and the P. M. was as happy as a sand-boy.

"After dinner Edwin read aloud one of Chesterton's Father Brown



stories, and then I read Max Beerbohm's Essay on Switzerland and then the P. M. read a sonnet of Keats so badly that it was hard not to laugh, and Diana said the ballad of Marie Hamilton."

Lady Diana Cooper tells us:

"Edwin was a new Coterie member, who, being 'very old' and very eminent, we called Mr. Montagu. We had a struggle to change to Edwin (a difficult name), but he felt the 'Mr.' put him out of our category.

"In this summer of 1915 he would say 'My fires give no heat'. That was his attitude to all things, but they blazed brightly enough for us. At his house we saw not unadulterated Coterie (Grenfells, Sitwells, Maurice Baring, Alan and Viola Parsons, Patrick Shaw-Stewart, Charles Lister, Katharine and Raymond Asquith etc.) but the Prime Minister and Margot, Winston and Clemmie, Augustine Birrell and most of the Government, politicians, new bloods of the town, and Edwin's brother in the Naval Brigade, Cardie [Lionel] Montagu. But of all these Edwin loved us best."

After quoting Duff Cooper's description of Montagu, Lady Diana adds: "In his face shone a benevolence that made me think he must be under some spell, and that a magic word, the fall of a sparrow, would allow him to cast his cruel disguise and turn into a shining paragon."



## CHAPTER V

### *Financial Secretary in Coalition Government (1915)*

Aet. 36

MONTAGU'S DEMOTION and omission from the Cabinet was a grievous disappointment to him. "In the last few months", he wrote to Venetia Stanley, "the P. M. has talked to me of being (1) Ireland, (2) Education, (3) Munitions, (4) Board of Trade, (5) ultimately(?) Exchequer and has offered me definitely P. M. G. or Board of Agriculture. Net result Under Secretary to McKenna!!" Montagu liked McKenna personally, but whereas Lloyd George had paid little attention to Treasury work and had left Montagu a free hand, McKenna was interested in detailed Treasury business and Montagu had less responsibility and scope. He could not help feeling that he could have made a better Chancellor of the Exchequer than McKenna and he thought McKenna was too easily rattled and was inclined to over-state the danger of national bankruptcy. Montagu was pleased that Treasury officials and City authorities welcomed him back, but had to try hard to avoid the City looking to him, rather than to his Chief, McKenna.

Characteristically, Montagu's feeling that he would have made a better Chancellor than McKenna was succeeded by the feeling that he, Montagu, was failing to make a success of his own work. He became over-tired, often ill, and depressed. The Coalition Government was not working smoothly and Lloyd George, with his supporters in the Press, was tending to eclipse Asquith. Montagu was delighted therefore when Asquith made a forcible and successful speech and wrote to congratulate him and on 15 June Montagu was elated by Asquith's cordial reply, in which he said, "You know well how high I rate your appreciation of anything I say or do. . . . I am very fortunate to have such a friend."

Asquith's Private Secretaries were Montagu's friends and he saw much of them. Maurice Bonham Carter,<sup>1</sup> Eric Drummond,

<sup>1</sup> Sir Maurice Bonham Carter, Sir Eric Drummond, afterwards Earl of Perth

Masterton Smith, Lieutenant-Colonel Fitzgerald,<sup>2</sup> Hankey and Montagu formed a "Brains Trust" which Asquith dubbed "the Shadow Cabinet." On 18 July 1915 they dined together at Montagu's house; later in the evening a bevy of Montagu's lady friends with the artist John Lavery and his wife, came in for supper, (he had invited them and forgotten all about them) and the Shadow Cabinet melted away. They seem to have usually met at Montagu's house on Fridays. At a Shadow Cabinet dinner on 3 July 1915 Maurice Bonham Carter's engagement to Violet Asquith was announced.

On the same day, 3 July 1915, Montagu sent to the Prime Minister, Mr Asquith, a sixteen-page letter giving his views on the "general situation." He was extremely pessimistic as to the possibility of pushing the German armies out of France by the existing strategy. He suggested that the best way of moving the Germans would be to adopt the heroic course of secretly devising a great retreat, heralded possibly by fictitious stories of disaster and defeat, of lack of ammunition and even fraudulent casualties; to draw the Germans once again to Paris, to lengthen their line and to spring upon them forces concentrated, say, in Marseilles in the South. But he goes on to say that it would seem to require a Napoleon to carry out and indeed in the present condition of French feeling to be impossible. "You cannot", he adds, "get enough heavy guns even for next summer's campaign."

Montagu told Asquith that he rejoiced to hear that we were now organising scientific invention (presumably tanks), "but any scientific surprise that we may have for the Germans depends for its success upon its not being used until it is available in sufficient numbers to make its employment decisive". "Surely," he concluded, "from all these considerations it is essential that we should sit down quietly and prepare by every means in our power for a concentrated and overwhelming action throughout Europe when we are ready, but not before."

Therefore, Montagu argued:

"The War must be a long one and becomes more than ever a war and J. E. Masterton Smith were Private Secretaries to Mr. Asquith.

<sup>2</sup> Lieutenant-Colonel G. A. C. Fitzgerald. Drowned with his Chief Lord Kitchener, in June 1916.



of endurance. Finance plays a larger and larger part in it, and I say with all the emphasis in my power that if we go on as we are doing now, despite our greater financial resources, we shall not be able to endure with sufficient ease long enough to ensure an undoubted victory. . . . We have, I think, too long been running the War on the principle that no one ought to feel it if we can avoid it. This is going to be disastrous.

“For the first time in the history of this country since the Black Death, the supply of labour has not been equal to the demand, and the working man knows it. Heavy taxation or forced loans would merely lead to demands for increased wages. The position could only be dealt with by an appeal to the public not to consume so much, by a prohibition of the import of non-essential things and, if necessary, a limitation of supplies. The working man must be made to feel the pinch of war. Bread, meat and perhaps other things should be rationed. This must be accompanied by a rigid economy in the government departments.”

Next comes a bitter attack on the Joint Stock Banks. This reveals a controversy which, as far as I know, has not hitherto been publicly recorded—and on which it would be interesting to hear the other side of the case.

“All the way through the War we have been hampered by the self-seeking and unpatriotic conduct of the Joint Stock Banks. The time has, I think, now come to take them by the throat and not to parley with them any longer. They are constantly seeking to obtain money from the Government or from the Bank of England at a lower rate than they would lend it to the public at, purely to increase their own profits. They tried this again and again from the last Chancellor of the Exchequer [Lloyd George] without success and I trust they will be no more successful now, but I believe there is every evidence that they are not really helping in the War Loan, and, if they do not mend their ways, I would tell them that we will raise the interest on the Loan to 5 per cent, keep the subscription list open and, when their business becomes impossible, come in and guarantee their depositors, while leaving their shareholders to suffer. Their selfishness is beyond belief and even now, while they are asking concessions from the Chancellor of the Exchequer



as a price of cooperation in the Loan, I hear that it is their intention—one Bank has already carried it out—to keep their dividends as usual, notwithstanding the serious depreciation in capital values.”

The letter concludes as follows:

“But now I come to what is really the burden of my prayer. I cannot understand how the Government is content to go on recruiting and recruiting men of all ages and employments. We must increase our export trade by the employment of many more men than at present, not only on munitions but on their normal avocations. What is the use of collecting a larger army than we have got at present, when it is known that you cannot equip the men you have got and that you have no sort of date in view when you can equip the men you are getting. I am perfectly certain that if we had been content with a small army at the start of the War and refused to enlarge it beyond a certain definite figure, we should now have an army smaller but better equipped; we should have been able to make munitions for the Russians, which would pay us better, and we should have been more use to our Allies. Let us for Heaven’s sake stop now. You are going to France next week. I am quite sure that sooner or later you will have to take over, if you want the French to go on at all, the whole finance of France. She has a Government which started the War heavily in debt on peace expenditure. Nobody has had the courage yet to raise a loan: nobody has had the courage to put on a penny of taxation. The English cannot be compelled to do anything but part with their money: the French can be compelled to do anything but will not part with a centime. And I think the right plan would be to say, if the French will go on through the winter putting forward every effort to kill Germans, but not to attack, we will place at their command and at their disposal a maximum army of men and not one man more, but we will finance them if it becomes necessary. We can only finance them, we can only make munitions, we can only find the money if we can make more money: and we can only make money by selling abroad, as we alone of the Allies are able to do, because we have command of the seas . . . I would not really mind compulsory military service for every young man who reaches the age of eighteen, but I would no longer recruit older men who are essential in other work. It has often been said that the best way to increase the

output of munitions is to increase the number of orders. This is a great mistake. When one order to one firm is not punctually executed, you do not cure the mischief by giving an order to another firm. All orders compete for the same raw material and for the same machinery and tools, and the secret of munitions is simply men, men, men. Just exactly in the same way I would stop as far as possible the manufacture of unnecessary articles for home consumption and do everything to facilitate profitable export, but I would observe that either the export firms must be taken over by the Government who would obtain the whole profit or there must be so heavy a tax on war profits as to prevent justifiable jealousy and envy between one part of the public and another.

“The question then remains, how large an army can we support in the field? I do not believe that there is any prospect at present of equipping an army of more than 1,250,000 men in any satisfactory way and therefore our total number of men training and drilling should not exceed 2,000,000. All the rest should be sent back to work and such recruiting as is necessary to keep the army up to that size and to repair losses, which ought not to be nearly as heavy as in the past period, ought to be undertaken from the young, from unnecessary trades, and from considered localities, in the way that I urged when I was a member of your Cabinet. Really recruiting should be under L.G.’s charge as it is so intimately connected with munitions output.

“... If we are to nurse the French, disappointed of their dearest hopes, through the next winter, we shall have to open our purse strings still wider because French finance has practically collapsed. We cannot do this at the present rate of national and personal expenditure: we cannot do this at the present rate of national and personal production. Let us stop this recruiting of men that we cannot arm and turn our attention to the far more valuable duties I have described.”

It will be seen that there was much wisdom in Montagu’s views and many of his radical proposals were adopted in one or both of the World Wars.

In the bitter controversy between McKenna, the Chancellor of



the Exchequer and Lord Cunliffe, the Governor of the Bank of England, as to whether the control of our gold and dollars rested in the last resort with the Treasury or the Bank, Cunliffe complained to the Prime Minister (Asquith) who "talked over the situation" with Lord Reading and Montagu, and then wrote to McKenna the "tough" letter of 25 July 1915 which is quoted by Lord Beaverbrook in his *Power and Politicians*, pp. 94-95.

The Prime Minister wrote: "The Governor of the Bank came to see me again yesterday morning and I have had the opportunity of talking over the situation with the Chief Justice [Reading] and Montagu. The result is that I feel a good deal of disquietude." Lord Beaverbrook points out that it is remarkable that Montagu, the Financial Secretary to the Treasury and thus McKenna's subordinate, is quoted as endorsing Cunliffe's complaint against McKenna.

On 16 August 1915 Montagu wrote to Asquith a remarkable letter analysing the troubled cross-currents of the Coalition Government and concluded that it would be better to yield to the demand for compulsory military service rather than to risk the fall of the Government.

"The hysterical condition of London, miserable at finding the War not sensational, is restive and in this position the question of what is called National Service becomes very important. It is earnestly advocated by some and by others it will be used as an opportunity for putting an end to the present Government and trying to get another.

"... Am I very much in fault in thinking that the question is not a very important one? It is not true to say that the voluntary system has broken down. It will not be true to say so if compulsion comes. The voluntary system has failed because it has been so shockingly applied.

"The result has been that moral compulsion has secured recruits by questionable methods and, although the numbers are probably satisfactory, we have got the wrong men very often.

"Suppose now that we determined that, having got the National Register, we proposed to use it, not for taking all people as soldiers at once, not for increasing the size of the Army beyond the size we can arm properly or support or maintain numerically, but giving

us the right to take such men for such purposes as we want, in order that we may impress our Allies and our enemies with our determination?

“Is it a very serious matter compared with other matters? It may be unnecessary, it may be foolish, it may produce little result, but I doubt very much if it is sufficiently serious to plunge us in the fatal delays and frictions caused by another change of Government.

“Well, but why do I consider this inevitable? Because I know that the compulsory service party mean mischief or business. They want the thing and they mean to have it. Kitchener will agree and join them. L. G. [Lloyd George, Minister of Munitions] will be the chief protagonist, backed by Winston, Curzon, Bonar Law, [Austen] Chamberlain [Secretary of State for India] etc. Please don't think I attribute disloyalty to you in any of these. The majority, I exclude Curzon, want most desperately that you should lead them and declare for them. But, poor things, they think wonders will result from this step. I don't, but I know they do.

“But, you will say, what of the others who don't like it? Well, I believe they would see how unimportant it was if properly used and properly handled.

“Moreover, and this may be a cynical view, I don't believe they are of the Government-smashing kind—they will agree because they don't advertise and they would take the reasonable view that they must acquiesce rather than cause trouble. The other side don't.

“And the country? Well, I believe that, if this step were taken because of our Allies, Russia in particular, and if it was not left to soldiers to muddle and if it was explained, not as the failure of the voluntary system and if it appeared commended by YOU as YOUR policy, I believe it would not be seriously opposed. If handled by anybody else there would be trouble, and serious trouble, but nothing like so serious as the formation of yet another new Government and probably a General Election.

“Please forgive me for troubling you. I want it to be said that you not only led the Liberal Party triumphantly for nearly ten years, but that you carried the War to a successful end. And it has come to my knowledge that this is to be made a test question. In ordinary times you might find the best device would be to make preliminary



enquiries and so delay until the storm had blown over. But they are, I hear, determined to prevent this and the material is so explosive that *one man* may precipitate the situation.”

When Parliament met in September 1915, McKenna introduced his Emergency Budget, which was discussed in October and November 1915. Lloyd George's first War Budget had been a comparatively mild one, influenced by the doctrine of “business as usual” which prevailed in the days when many people expected the War to be over by Christmas 1914. The second War Budget of May 1915, which McKenna inherited, when the Asquith Coalition Government was formed at the end of May 1915, imposed taxation estimated to yield £65 millions. McKenna's third War Budget in September 1915, was far more drastic and the taxation which it imposed estimated to yield £101 millions, played a prominent part in the destruction of the social life of the Edwardian upper class which formed the background to British politics before 1914. Income tax was increased by 40 per cent and an Excess Profits Duty was imposed; duties on sugar, tea, tobacco and other things were increased.

The Budget and other War measures were introduced by McKenna and usually Montagu's task was to reply to the detailed points raised in debate. But in an important speech<sup>3</sup> on the Second Reading of the Finance Bill on 13 October 1915 Montagu gave a lucid and forceful exposition of the cardinal principle of War Finance, namely that the country could only obtain the goods and services required to conduct the War by every individual reducing to a minimum his or her own demands for goods and services.

“There is no direction, it seems to me,” he said, “in which the public can stint itself without exercising a beneficial effect on the national finance. . . . The man who spends on articles he can do without now, and does not stint himself to the standard of the figures which I have quoted as showing what is necessary, who does not set himself to mould his life so that he will be in a position to afford one half of his income for the country—the man who does not set that ideal before him is, in my opinion, not doing his duty in this War . . . . We have pledged, and we want to see pledged, the

<sup>3</sup> Parliamentary Debates, cols. 1341 to 1351.

resources of this country to the utmost in this fight. I think it is for the people to see that their resources are ready, and are not dissipated upon private expenditure.”

Meanwhile the acute dissensions in the Coalition Cabinet about the Dardanelles and about compulsory service continued. Asquith tried always to pour oil on the troubled waters, but Montagu urged him to take arms against his sea of troubles, and by opposing end them. He wrote the following spirited, but rather surprising letter:

“24 Queen Anne’s Gate  
“22-10-1915

“My dear Prime Minister,

“It is obviously most distressing that the fates should have placed on you indisposition, so rare to you, at a time of such importance. It has however taught, I am glad to think, some of your more thoughtless colleagues how short a time of experiment it takes to prove your indispensability. So much to the good.”

“The letter went on to say that coalition is bound to fail if there is no united policy or confidence between colleagues. A General Election in war-time was unthinkable. Therefore Montagu put forward the following suggestions:

“(1) Don’t come near the House of Commons till you are quite well and prepared to state your policy.

“(2) Introduce a Bill to prolong the life of Parliament and use that occasion to make a statement and get a vote of confidence.

“(3) In the meantime write to Winston [then Chancellor of the Duchy] and Curzon [then Lord Privy Seal] asking for their resignations not from hostility but with regret on the ground that their action shows that they are not in accord with you and your colleagues on war policy and have no confidence in their colleagues. *Don’t let them resign.* Turn them out. Bulgaria should be attacked while it is still mobilising before they can choose when to attack you. If you let them resign on, say conscription, loyal fellows like [Walter] Long and [Bonar] Law must, out of loyalty to the belief they share, go too. The loss of a colleague by resignation leaves you weaker (e.g. Curzon). The loss of a colleague by dismissal must leave you stronger. Strike before you are struck, *that is the*



*essence*. State too why you have struck. Winston's attacks on K. and Grey are almost enough in themselves.

"(4) Announce that what is impossible in the Cabinet is impossible in the Press. Discussion there is alright when it can be answered, but not now. You have taken administrative action by which the *Times*, *Daily Mail*, and *Evening News* would not appear again except under guarantee of good behaviour. You were going to ask for an Act of Indemnity and powers to treat any other newspapers similarly. But act before you get the power—drama and suddenness is absolutely essential.

"(5) State that the War would in future be conducted by a committee of *three*—you, A. J. B. [Arthur Balfour], K. [Lord Kitchener,] but that, when they were concerned, you would call in to the Committee—i. e. when you cared to summon them—S. of S. for India [Austen Chamberlain], Ch. of Exchequer [McKenna], S. of S. for Colonies [Bonar Law], Minister of Munitions [Lloyd George], Foreign Secretary [Grey], or indeed anybody else. The dismissal of Winston and Curzon is an essential of this scheme. For the Cabinet which will be left to deal with departmental matters can't have loquacious people who have no departments left in it. If you have a larger Committee you get involved in questions of balance of parties in coalition and who to leave out. Put in any one person and you can't stop at him. This is *vital*. George is not a war minister but a supply minister.

"(6) Tell Bonar Law you will not appoint his nominees when vacancies occur. Parties are now fused and you want the best man of which you must be the judge. It is unthinkable that you should reinforce your enemies by F. E. [F. E. Smith, Lord Birkenhead], Duke<sup>4</sup> [Chief Secretary for Ireland] is far more useful than Cave.<sup>5</sup> Bob Cecil is far better than F. E.

"(7) The weakness of this scheme is the treatment of George, or rather the fact that I have left him out. Originally yesterday I would have urged that you treat him logically as you treat Winston and Curzon, but it is no use urging the impossible and he is still too strong in the country and the army. So for sheer expediency

<sup>4</sup> Sir Henry E. Duke, Lord Merrivale (1855-1939); Chief Secretary for Ireland, 1915-18.

<sup>5</sup> Viscount Cave (1856-1925), G.C.M.G., Solicitor General, 1915; Home Secretary, 1916-19; Lord Chancellor, 1922-28.

I suggest you keep him, shorn of his press and after a very straight talk about his conduct. His appointment of Lee<sup>6</sup> and Money<sup>7</sup> just now are most impudent. But I still do not think him treacherous at all. He is panic-struck. He must be told to pull himself together, to work loyally with his colleagues etc., and he must be appealed to on his sentimental side, reminded of all he owes to you etc., etc. He is an asset and would be formidable still outside.

“But once again it is essential that you should *strike before you are struck*—that you should strike dramatically.

“Forgive me if I have been dogmatic. I care for nothing but your continued success. I have been dogmatic in an effort to be brief. And I am sure that, in that you are necessary to the country, it is in no way selfish to act with swift vigour.

“Yours most devotedly,  
“(Sd) EDWIN S. MONTAGU”

This rather startling letter shows how acute the controversy about man-power had become in October 1915. Lloyd George, Curzon, Austen Chamberlain, Churchill and Selborne (Minister of Agriculture) regarded 70 Divisions as essential to meet the needs of the Army; McKenna and Runciman were convinced that anything more than 54 Divisions meant inevitably that it would be impossible to meet the needs of the Navy and the Allies and to produce enough exports to prevent financial collapse. McKenna, Runciman and Asquith himself did not regard compulsory military service as wicked in principle; their conviction was that to attempt the impossible would mean defeat. But others regarded compulsion as morally wrong and some Liberals tended to regard it also as a victory for the Tories.

Under the Derby scheme for national registration every man of military age had to register and to state whether he volunteered for military service. The Government had promised that married men would not be called up till the available unmarried men had been enlisted either (as was hoped) voluntarily, or, failing that, by compulsion. The period for registration was from July to

<sup>6</sup> Col. Arthur Lee, M.P., Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry of Munitions.

<sup>7</sup> Sir Leo Chiozza Money, M.P., Parliamentary Private Secretary to the Minister of Munitions (Lloyd George), 1915-16.



December 1915. But only 2,800,000 out of a possible 5 million single men volunteered.

Only by a miracle was the break-up of the Asquith Coalition Government avoided—or rather postponed for a year.

On 28 December 1915 the Cabinet, after much heated discussion, decided to introduce a Military Service Bill, conscripting single man of military age. In protest McKenna and Runciman resigned, despite a personal appeal from Margot Asquith. (“Do you love your opinions more than you love him?”)

Montagu at once wrote to McKenna:

“The P. M. has told me of your interview with him to-day and its purport.

“I am more miserable than I can say. We have worked for six months in perfect happiness so far as I am concerned save that, think what you will of me. . . . I feel that I must above all stick to the P. M. to the end.

“I would implore you to take the same view whatever sacrifice it may involve. I believe that by so doing you would earn his support in resisting the demands of the War Office, and obtain it.” (Quoted from *Reginald McKenna* by Stephen McKenna. Eyre and Spottiswood, 1948, p. 257.)

The miracle of reaching a compromise was achieved largely by the skill of Lord Hankey who, on 30 December 1915 persuaded McKenna to accept in principle an offer from Sir William Robertson, and arranged a meeting between them that day. This enabled Grey, who had also resigned, both to withdraw his resignation and to persuade McKenna and Runciman to do likewise.

The next day Asquith told his Private Secretary (Vaughan Nash) that Hankey had done very well, and told his wife that no praise could be too high for Reading, Montagu and Hankey.

Meanwhile Montagu, whose official position as a junior Treasury Minister was an exacting and unrewarding one, had made several efforts to succeed Lord Hardinge as Viceroy of India and the following letter put forward his claims “once again, but for the last time.”

“22nd December, 1915

“My dear Prime Minister,

“I have just heard that it has been decided that Lord Hardinge’s

term of office is not to be extended again. You are therefore considering (for the time is short) the name of his successor.

“I feel that I should not be doing my duty to myself or as I conceive it to India, if I did not once again put forward with insistence, but for the last time, my own claims. I hope you will not resent it. I have carefully considered all the other possible names and, if I say that I know of no-one who seems to me likely to do for India what I want done, I hope you will take it as an expression of opinion given in the frank and unpretending spirit in which you have always allowed me to address you.

“Indian problems attract me with an intensity which I can find for no other problems. I have no other ambition save to go to India and I have had no other since I entered public life. I have in asking you for favours in the past always been able to consider the interests of your Government and the personal affection and esteem for yourself which grow with length of association. But in this instance I am only considering myself and after a continuous consideration of my motives I find them respectable.

“I have spent four years in Indian government, six months of which I passed in India and many months of which I acted as Under Secretary during the absence of the Secretary of State [at the Durbar in India in 1911]. Since I left the India Office I have kept up my Indian friendships and correspondence, and read the Indian newspapers and by this knowledge I can say that this next Viceroyalty is going to be the most important which can be contemplated. The psychological moment in Indian history will be the opening of the chapter which will begin after the War.

“Opportunities lost in India cannot be recovered except at great cost and I fear that a conventional appointment now may lose for ever much that no subsequent activity can regain. That is why I am not content to wait. That is why I am impelled to approach you with all the entreaty at my command. That is why you want a Viceroy who knows India and has enough adaptability to use his knowledge! ! !

“It may be said that the real seat of Government is the India Office. That cannot be so. Much might be done at home if the India Office were modernised and liberalised. But distance would even then be an insurmountable obstacle. Nine Secretaries of State out of ten say ditto to the Viceroy, the tenth is throttled by



his Council (often chosen on the advice of the Viceroy in order to paralyse a Secretary of State). And even when all this does not happen the Secretary of State in controversy is nearly always beaten in India. The Viceroy is really the power and must become more and more so as he supports himself by increasing Indian organisation.

“I want to see a Viceroy who will try to be an energetic administrator rather than a mock royalty surrounded by out of date and rather tawdry pomp—one who goes to India attracted by India rather than by the dignity of the office, one who will improve the system of representative government, consider without prejudice the demands born of India’s share in the War, devise a better system of taxation, heal the schisms between Islam and Hinduism, simplify the land system, organise the independent States and decentralise the Government (at a time when *men* will be scarcer than ever because of the War).

“These are the problems which of all others in the World I want to tackle. I know of no others to which I could apply myself with the same faith of some result. I believe I could do something while setting myself the task of avoiding friction either with many interests out there or the Home Government. If I could have my chance out there, I am quite prepared to abandon all hope of ever being asked to do anything else.

“Now just a word or two as to the objections:

“It may be said I am too young. Well, I am about the same age as Curzon was when he went to India and have a record of past public service (thanks to you) better than his when he was chosen. But I have heard you say yourself that the Viceroyalty was an office for a young man. It is no use going to India when fatigue has destroyed initiative and experience in other offices has replaced energy. Vigour and energy are essential in India to-day. They were the qualities which made the first five years of Curzon’s regime successful.

“Then there is the question of my race. That is the serious obstacle and it is one which you must balance against other considerations. It is an objection from the point of view of civil servants and perhaps of soldiers. But their training teaches them to accept what comes and I have many friends among them. As regards the *Indians* I do not believe it to be an objection. I have not canvassed for

opinions, but I have received spontaneous and oft-repeated entreaties to go to India from

- “The Aga Khan —a Mohammedan
- “Bikaner —a modern and highly esteemed Rajput
- “Alwar —a less modern and less esteemed but far cleverer Rajput
- “Gupta —a modern Babu
- “Mohan Malaveya—a Brahmin of the old type
- “This is not an unrepresentative list.

“You can only choose a Viceroy from one of three categories.

(a) Men whom you or someone else wants to get rid of, e.g., McKenna, Kitchener.

(b) Men whom you want to reward, e.g. [The Earl of] Derby. [the Earl of] Beauchamp etc.

“If you resort to either of these categories you go to a category unworthy of a Liberal Prime Minister for it implies the abandonment of the attempt to find a man fitted for the post. This quite apart from the admirable qualities which the examples I have quoted may possess. There are many attractions from the wrong point of view for instance about Kitchener.

“The third category is the one to which I claim to belong the category of those chosen because of their knowledge and desire to deal with Indian affairs. There is of course Islington [Montagu’s Under Secretary], but if I am not to go I had rather you chose someone from another category. He has the right enthusiasm it is true but—Oh, well, I have said all I can say with a candour that frightens me.

“I have, as you know, almost boundless faith in your judgment. You have now all the data I can provide and if you decide against me (I admit the disabilities) although I can conceive nothing which would cause me more sorrow than the abandonment of this ambition, your decision will be accepted by me as the right one.

“Yours always,

“(Sd) EDWIN S. MONTAGU”

“Of course you may have been advised that I am *wrong* in my estimate of my reception by Indians. If this is so I immediately with-



draw for it would be preposterous to ask you to act against such advice. I could then make cheerfully the best of the work here you have been good enough to give me, work which I do of course enjoy very much.

“I have thought of [Viscount] D’Abernon, but he would be better as an Ambassador, say, in Paris.”

Asquith rejected Montagu’s petition and Montagu loyally, though most reluctantly accepted his decision.

## CHAPTER VI

### *Financial Secretary and Chancellor of the Duchy (January-July 1916)*

Aet. 37

FROM JANUARY to July 1916 Montagu combined the posts of Financial Secretary to the Treasury and of Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. As Chancellor of the Duchy he was in the Asquith Coalition Cabinet, but was not a member of the War Committee of the Cabinet.

The man-power controversy and the question of compulsory military service continued to divide the Coalition Cabinet in the early months of 1916. McKenna and the General Staff had agreed on a compromise of fifty-four Divisions for overseas. There remained the question of the number of Divisions needed for home service. Should it be as few as six, or as many as thirteen? Montagu wrote to Asquith on 6 January 1916 giving McKenna's case for six, saying that he found it convincing and that he hoped that Asquith would accept it. He added:

"What you gain is enormous, for if McKenna and Runciman were able next Tuesday to state on the second reading of the Bill that the size of the Army was a matter on which the Cabinet had determined, that they cordially endorsed the Cabinet decision, that the Bill was absolutely essential to recruit it, and that there was no danger of the Bill becoming an instalment of compulsion on a larger scale because compulsion on a larger scale would be unnecessary, I think the crisis would be over.

"Of course my premises may be inaccurate in that all I know is what McKenna told me this evening.

"He has been playing a noble game all day in persuading members to vote for the Bill. I wonder whether you heard Robertson's speech, it was far the best in my opinion in the debate.

"... P.S. I have discussed this matter with Hankey. He tells me



that he thinks the War Office, chastened very much as they are by to-day's occurrences at the Trades Union Congress [who feared industrial conscription] will have very little difficulty in accepting the fifty-four plus six."

On 28 March 1916 Montagu telegraphed to Asquith, who was at a Conference in Paris, that the conscriptionists were again on the war path and that Hankey had better come home from Paris instead of going to Rome with Asquith.

A Cabinet Committee on Military Man Power and Finance was appointed. The members were Asquith (Chairman), McKenna, Lansdowne and Chamberlain, with Hankey as Secretary. It reported on 14 April that there was no case for extending compulsion to all men of military age. When its report was finished Montagu wrote to Asquith:

"I have now seen in its final form the Report of your Cabinet Committee and feel that we have now got quite clear of that ditch and that you are much to be congratulated on your Chairmanship. The military part of the Report is of extraordinary importance and is as novel to me as the financial part must be to my colleagues. The Board of Trade part is to me almost unintelligible . . . .

"The financial part of the Report has been very carefully written and re-written by Hankey and Bradbury [Permanent Secretary to the Treasury, afterwards Lord Bradbury] and improved by Keynes and the Chancellor [McKenna], and seems to me to be everything that can be required.

"When it comes to conclusions I am bound to confess that I am amused and astonished and I hope you will not be angry with me if I say that this part 5 seems to me to be the least valuable portion of the Report so far as definite consequences are concerned. Viewed as a method of harmonising Chamberlain and McKenna it seems to me to be quite brilliant. But when I remember that I have been told all along that there was no room for argument, that more than 54 Divisions could not be maintained in the field, that the size of the Army must be definitely determined, that the War Office must not be permitted to keep to their scheme, that a decision was absolutely essential (1) before Parliament met, (2) before the second reading of the Bill etc. etc. etc., I am astonished and

*educated* by seeing the Chancellor of the Exchequer is satisfied with paragraph 3 and with leaving the Army Council to try and do what he thinks is impossible. He tells me that he is glad to find that he is not committed longer than April ! !

“All is well that ends well, and from to-day I learn how easily one can be disturbed by those who do not put all their cards on the table. I shall never be able to discover what the exact motive in all this was. However I am delighted that it is all over and that you have been successful once again.

“To-day’s honour to Sir Maurice [Hankey] is very gratifying to all his admirers and friends. He is undoubtedly the discovery of the War. I do not think I have ever met a man with the same coolness and impartiality of judgment.”

But Montagu’s congratulations on solving the man-power difficulty were woefully premature. The Cabinet were sharply divided when the Report of this Man-power Committee came before them on 19 April 1916 and the Prime Minister had to admit to the House of Commons that the Cabinet had failed to reach agreement and to ask for the discussion to be postponed.

The Cabinet reached agreement on 20 April on a plan which fell short of universal compulsion and submitted their plan to a Secret Session of the House of Commons on 25 April. But the majority of the House were convinced that the time had come for universal compulsion and the proposals of the Government had to be withdrawn. Instead all men from ages eighteen to forty-one became liable for military service, unless exempted, by the Second Military Service Act passed on 25 May 1916.

The War Committee of the Cabinet decided to appoint a Committee on man-power, and the Prime Minister invited Montagu to be Chairman, but Montagu declined on the ground that he could not do the work as it should be done without neglecting his important work as Financial Secretary to the Treasury.

The fourth War Budget was introduced by McKenna on 4 April 1916 and financial topics occupied a good deal of Parliamentary time till July 1916, when Montagu’s service as Financial Secretary to the Treasury ended on his promotion to be Minister of Munitions.

This Budget included large increases in Income Tax, the new



Entertainments Duty and an increase of taxes on sugar, cocoa, coffee and motors and some new duties on matches, mineral waters and other things, while Excess Profits Duty was raised from 50 per cent to 60 per cent.

The Budget was well received, but many detailed points were raised to which Montagu replied in winding up the debate. Subsequently the Committee stage of the Finance Bill involved him in a great deal of work.

Meanwhile in a speech at Cambridge on 21 February 1916, he had found occasion for reflections of a more general character. As the difficulties and strains of the War increased, the Government had been driven, as a matter of solving day-to-day problems, and not on any abstract principle, to measures of State Socialism. Montagu's comment is interesting. He pleaded for an open mind on fiscal policy and State control in the light of War experience. "Look back", he said, "and see the use which Germany has made of her trade, and ask yourselves whether we can afford or dare to let that happen again." If Montagu had lived longer, would he one day have received from a Labour Government the position of Viceroy of India which was refused to him by Asquith and Lloyd George?

Conscription and Finance did not monopolise Montagu's thoughts. In the month of February 1916 they covered the diverse fields of Ireland, decimal coinage and ambassadors.

*Ireland.* Montagu sent the following note on 7 February 1916 to Sir Thomas Heath, Joint Permanent Secretary to the Treasury:

"I was over in Ireland last week-end for reasons of pure holiday and pleasure, but what I saw convinced me that we are not only wrong but on dangerous lines in treating Ireland as analogous to a series of English counties or even to Scotland. There is no doubt about it at all that the old-fashioned Nationalist Member is losing his influence in Ireland, that the anti-English feeling is growing, that the younger priest is anti-Home Rule, and that every possible opportunity is taken to gain recruits from the ranks of those who are our friends to the ranks of those who are determined to foster the separatist movement.

"I cannot disguise from you that I am frightened about this situation. At the present moment while we are at war the only way to deal with Ireland seems to me to keep them sweet on money

matters, and £10,000 spent to avert a row is far better than £10,000 saved at the cost of a row because of analogy with English or other conditions. We must have regard to the administration of Ireland and we must be very careful in my opinion not to put ourselves in the position of making difficulties for the Irish Government or really for the Nationalist Party, for they are our weakening bulwark.”

### *Decimal Coinage*

“5th February, 1916

“My dear Prime Minister,

“An idea has struck me which I have communicated to the Chancellor of the Exchequer and which I should like you to turn over in your mind for future conversation. For I have learnt from your speeches and conversation what little I know of political economy. It seems to me that services are being rendered to-day in England for a halfpenny which cannot really be performed for that sum. The halfpenny newspapers are feeling it: the halfpenny post is an example. I cannot but feel that the value of money has so much depreciated and will take so long to recover that a halfpenny is no longer a useful coin as the lowest denomination of our currency. If we altered the penny so that it became equal in value to one-tenth of a shilling and the halfpenny to one-twentieth instead of one-twentyfourth, we should have done much to rectify this, whilst at the same time placing our coinage on a decimal basis—a result to which I must confess to having hereditary<sup>1</sup> leanings. The effects on real wages and on prices are a subject which I want to explore when I have time; but it is quite clear that nothing of this kind could be done without long notice to the public and I merely communicate my idea to you in order that, if ever you have time for such speculations, you may tell me what you think of it.

“Yours sincerely,  
“(Sd) E. S. M.”

*Ambassadors.* The following letter was to Eric Drummond, then Private Secretary to the Foreign Secretary, (Grey).

<sup>1</sup> Lord Swaythling was President of the Decimal Association.



“26th February, 1916

“Dear Eric,

“I have frequently had to complain to you during the course of the War, of the fact that, in my humble opinion, the diplomatic service is at the root of all our ailments, past and present. And, unless we take care, future. Look at Persia, Turkey, Bulgaria, France, Italy. Give yourself the pleasure of an interview with any of our moth-eaten Ambassadors who have returned from belligerent countries: and I do not even yet despair of getting you to agree with me that the diplomatic service, with its predilection for promotion by seniority, its method of recruitment, its concomitant of divorcing the ambassadors from everything that the Home Government is thinking, its practise of refusing to speak English but of communicating amongst themselves or at home in the language of diplomatic telegrams—all these have robbed our diplomacy of life. In the early part of the War I tried, having enlisted the sympathies of Lloyd George, to get Edward Grey to take Balkan diplomacy into his own hands on the spot. I wonder what the result would have been had we done that.

“But now I come to the point of my rehearsing all this again. When the Morgan contract was being arranged over a year ago, I was privileged to receive assurances that Spring Rice, however amiable and delightful he undoubtedly may be, had no influence in America. At that time it was suggested by me that Lord Rosebery should be asked to take his place or Bryce sent back on special mission. I never heard it argued that Spring Rice was satisfactory, but of course nothing has been done. . .

“I would suggest whether it would not be a good thing to send Crewe or Hardinge on his return from India at once to America. I know things are pretty bad in Paris, but you can trust Bertie<sup>2</sup> to gossip amiably and it is possible to ascertain exactly what is going on in Paris by sending someone under 150 and not so fond of dinner-table gossip from time to time to see what is actually going on.

“Yours in great anger,

“E. S. M.”

To return to Home politics, a rather startling suggestion was made by Asquith to Montagu on 1 May 1916. The Prime Minister

<sup>2</sup> Viscount Bertie, G.C.B., G.C.M.G. (1844-1919), Ambassador at Paris, 1905-18.

gave dinner to Edwin and Venetia Montagu, Maurice and Violet Bonham Carter, Eric Drummond and Maurice Hankey. After dinner the P. M. started to talk about the Irish Chief Secretaryship, and after considering all candidates, offered it to Montagu. He was obviously taken by surprise and disconcerted. He pointed out all the objections, his own Jewish race, his lack of physical courage (of which Hankey comments, "I never saw any sign"), and of interest in the Irish race. He said he would only take it out of personal loyalty to the P. M., and if he absolutely insisted. He asked for either Drummond or Hankey as Under Secretary, but the P. M. at once said he could not have Hankey.

The next day Montagu enumerated his reasons for hesitating to accept the post in a letter to Asquith:

"(1) I put first the fact that my personal relations with Birrell are so intimate and affectionate that the idea of stepping into his shoes when he has retired in something like disgrace is repugnant to me in the extreme. I think this personal consideration applies to Birrell more than to any other member of the Cabinet after—and a long way after—yourself.

"(2) I am, as you know, profoundly interested in the conduct of the War and what is to come out of the War; . . . I cannot contemplate, without abandoning most of my political interests, being taken away from any connection with any of these topics to undertake work in no way connected with the War . . . .

"(3) There is no possibility of doing Ireland well. It must mean, it seems to me, for me an approximation to political death. . . . It is hard to contemplate this before one has ever enjoyed the task of attempting to do any of the things one has wanted to do."

Montagu next mentioned his Jewish race as an obstacle. Apparently Asquith had regarded Montagu's race as disqualifying him for the post of Secretary of State for India; Montagu differed from him "most profoundly" on this, but he did regard the Board of Education and Chief Secretary for Ireland as offices which must deal "with religious questions in a creed which I do not believe." Moreover the Under Secretary, Sir Matthew Nathan, was also a Jew.

Further Montagu said that he had no knowledge of nor interest in Irish affairs.

Montagu then proceeded to assess what he could not, and what



he could, succeed in. "I suffer from no modesty, as you know. I think I have a fair knowledge of my own capacities and qualifications: but I do not see myself in the position of being responsible for or administering punishment, repression, coercion, or making up my mind to avoid punishment, repression and coercion." (These were the problems in India which made Montagu so unhappy a few years later). "I shrink with horror from being responsible for punishment. And I am, I regret to say, peculiarly sensitive to public and to newspaper criticism, to letters of abuse and so forth. I have done my best to fight against it: I have not succeeded in overcoming it. I will agree that these qualities set a fearful limit upon my political aspirations; but to nervous and sensitive persons these limits must exist." Montagu goes on to suggest that one day he might make a Chancellor of the Exchequer, or an imaginative administrator of the Board of Trade or a good Minister of Munitions, or could cope with the problems of the Local Government Board or the civilian side of the War Office or Admiralty. But, Montagu added, the offices which he could never hold were the Home Secretary or the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Colonial Secretary or Secretary of State for India, "save that I frankly admit that my enthusiasm for Indian affairs might have led to an obscuring of the disadvantage by the absorbing interest which I should find in the functions of the office."

Montagu very successfully held the office of Minister of Munitions, for which he felt himself well-fitted, and his period of office as Secretary of State for India was often made unhappy by measures of punishment, repression and coercion alien to his character which he described with so much insight.

At this period Montagu was very much in the centre of things. On 9 May he gave lunch to Lloyd George and Hankey and left them together to discuss the Military-Man-Power-Finance Committee's Report. Next day he gave dinner to Arthur Balfour (First Lord of the Admiralty), Lord Crewe (Lord President of the Council), Lord Hardinge, Lord French (then Commander in Chief in France), Hankey and "some ladies."

After the tragic death of Kitchener, Lloyd George wished to be appointed Secretary of State for War. The following letter dated 20 June 1916 is quoted on page 319 of *Tempestuous Journey* by Frank Owen:

“Dear Prime Minister,

“I happened to see L. G. at Rufus’s [Lord Reading’s] last night. He was of course very excited about Ireland and said the War Office must wait till we are over that.

“But he still thinks that he had been offered the Office. He now quite clearly, in my opinion, *will* take it without any change of status or constitution. He appears to be no better informed or differently informed as to K’s position.<sup>3</sup>

“It would clearly be very disastrous to make any other arrangement while he thinks he has been offered it and is considering it. . . .

“But all this must wait for the minute because of Ireland.<sup>4</sup> I approve, but it would also clearly be advantageous to have L. G. at the War Office during the announcement of heavy casualties and possibly unfruitful offensive.”

Mr. Frank Owen adds: “This letter was found by J. T. Davies [Lloyd George’s Secretary] in a drawer at No. 10 Downing Street long after Asquith had gone and Lloyd George succeeded him as Prime Minister. Some people wondered if it had been left behind deliberately.”

<sup>3</sup> Lord Kitchener had been deprived of much of his authority and it was thought that Lloyd George might have stipulated for full authority to be restored to the post of Secretary of State for War.

<sup>4</sup> After the tragic Easter Rebellion of April 1916 and Asquith’s visit to Ireland in May, the Cabinet invited Lloyd George to try to negotiate a settlement. He did so in June, on the basis of Home Rule excluding Ulster but the Unionists in the Cabinet refused to agree to Irish Members remaining at Westminster and by the end of July 1916 the negotiations had broken down.



## CHAPTER VII

### *Minister of Munitions (July-December 1916)*

Aet. 37

WHEN LLOYD GEORGE got his way and left the Ministry of Munitions to become Secretary of State for War, Asquith, on 1 July 1916 offered the post of Minister of Munitions,<sup>1</sup> with a seat in the Cabinet, to Montagu, who took office on 10 July. Montagu counted the six months which he spent at the Ministry as the most satisfying and enjoyable of his career. At first there was some resentment when Lloyd George continued to interfere, but this seems to have passed away quickly. By 16 September Montagu was utterly exhausted and had a short holiday with his wife in the Outer Hebrides.

The Ministry had been in existence little more than a year, but it had already achieved a most remarkable success. Starting with a table and two chairs, but no carpet, it had grown into a very large organisation, administering the expenditure of some £500 millions a year. Under Montagu the Ministry continued to grow rapidly—from 5,000 to 8,000; new responsibilities were taken and many new branches created, each under its Director General. Co-ordination became an essential task. Montagu instituted fortnightly meetings of Heads of Departments. To the first of these meetings, held on 12 October 1916, he said:

“The first consideration is now no longer to desire to harness energy and speed in developing the sources of production; what we have now to do is to consider the best use to make of our mobilised resources. The disadvantage of mobilisation is that, when you have mobilised what you have got, there is less to be mobilised in future, and, although I have not the slightest doubt that we are in a better position than any other country in the world, enemy or ally, yet the fact remains that, both in material and man-power, the more we do, the shorter we become, and our chief aim, if we are going to

<sup>1</sup> Lloyd George had asked that the post should be given to Winston Churchill.

husband these resources, ought to be to act collectively, so that there shall be no overlapping, as little competition as possible, and as high a degree of economy of the common services as possible in our desire to supply all we can for the Allies and our own cause.”<sup>2</sup>

The Ministry covered a very varied field. Montagu in making his statement in Parliament on 15 August 1916 said:

“When I was told I had to make a statement on the Munitions Department, I cast my thoughts over the matters with which I had to deal on that particular day.

“I began with a friendly controversy with a Government office about the transport from the near Arctic Circle to a neutral country of a mineral the name of which was unknown to me, but which I was assured was the limiting factor in the output of certain indispensable munitions. I went on to discuss the question as to whether we should press the India Office, in the interests of the Munitions supply, to construct a certain railway line in a remote part of India. There was a question of certain measures affecting the output of gold in South Africa. There was the discussion as to the allocation of a certain chemical, very limited in quantity, to meet the competing needs of the Army, the Navy and the Air Service. There was a deputation from an important educational institution asking to be allowed to continue certain building operations. There was a discussion about the men deported from the Clyde. There was a discussion of certain contracts in America valued at over £10 million sterling. In the course of the morning the Munitions Invention Department brought to see me some walking specimens of exceedingly ingenious artificial legs. There was a conference on the allocations of several highly skilled workmen of a particular class among competing firms. There was a discussion as to the quickest means of manufacturing gun carriages. There were a hundred and one topics which must confront any body of men who spend their whole days watching curves which ought always to go up and figures which ought always to swell; reading reports from all parts of the world, and confronted always with the cry ‘more, more, more!’ and ‘better, better, better!’”

In the same speech Montagu said:

<sup>2</sup> *History of the Ministry of Munitions*, vol. 2, p. 48.



“The twelve National Projectile factories cover an area of seventy acres. They consist of bays with an average breadth of fourteen feet, and a total length of fifteen miles. They contain 10,000 machine tools which are driven by seventeen miles of shafting at an energy of 25,000 horsepower, and their daily output would fill a train one mile long composed of 400 trucks and requiring eight engines to pull it . . . .

“There are, I believe, some 500 different munition processes upon which women are now engaged, two-thirds of which have never been performed by a woman previous to twelve months ago. I ask the House to consider this, together with the work done by women in hospitals, in agriculture, in transport trades and in every type of clerical operation, and I would respectfully submit, when the time and occasion offer, it will be opportune to ask: ‘Where is the man, now, who would deny to women the civil rights which she has earned by hard work?’

“There is a new spirit in every department of industry which I feel certain is not destined to disappear when we are at liberty to divert it from its present supreme purpose of beating the Central Powers.

“... We have now in being, now that the British industry is organised for war, the General Staff of British Industry. I am sure that we should sacrifice much if we did not avail ourselves of that staff to consider how far all this moral and material energy can be turned to peaceful account instead of being dispersed in peacetime.”

One of the most difficult problems with which Montagu had to deal was that of man-power.

“The Army was desperately short of recruits, munition factories were desperately short of workers, and there was profound and widespread unrest among industrial workers, led by the shop stewards, due to the belief that the pledged word of the Government was being violated; that dilution was being used to force skilled men into the army, and to exempt those who had taken up munition work to evade military service.”<sup>3</sup>

A small Advisory Committee was set up on 3 October 1916. The Chairman (Sir Arthur Duckham, K.C.B.) and the Vice-Chairman,

<sup>3</sup> *History of the Ministry of Munitions*, vol. 1, p. 38.

(Sir James Stevenson, Bart), had no departmental duties; the other five members were heads of departments, chosen for their personal qualifications. At first the idea of any such Board or Advisory Committee was viewed with extreme distrust. But in practice it was found that the Advisory Committee had established excellent relations with all the departments.

When Asquith had it in mind to appoint Duckham as Food Controller, Montagu objected strongly. He wrote on 27 November 1916:

“When I reorganised the Ministry, I started an Advisory Committee of my six best men to view the Ministry as a whole and investigate each problem as it came up. I refer them to the Committee and the Committee suggests references of its own. They have already produced invaluable reports on many subjects and have helped to construct an ordered Ministry in which departments are kept related to one another. The Committee is already much overworked. It really constitutes a ‘General Staff’. Duckham is Chairman. This work and his work on inventions keep him more than fully occupied, and he is the principal man here to whom I am looking for advice on our own very important reconstruction problems.”

Though Montagu was no longer a Treasury Minister, he remained deeply interested in McKenna’s difficulties. Mrs. Asquith wrote to him about these. He drafted a reply which, in fact, he neither sent to her nor showed to Mr. Asquith. But the draft is of great interest as indicating his real views both of McKenna and of Lloyd George. This draft reads as follows:

“8th August, 1916

“My dear Margot,

“No one can feel more concerned than I am about events at the Treasury. It is not only that McKenna has found difficulties with Rufus [Lord Reading] and with Lord Cunliffe—difficulties which I believe are irretrievable. It is also that even if they were retrievable just as Winston lost the confidence of the sailors, so McKenna lost the confidence of financial interests, and even if Cunliffe, let us say, were replaced by some other Governor of the Bank, the same difficulties would arise again. It is tragic to think that it is not



really a question of ability; it is a question of method and manner.

“If this were all it would be bad enough, but we are face to face with inter-Ally difficulties of McKenna’s making. These difficulties are now public knowledge and are talked about openly. They concern Russia, the most popular of our Allies. They are holding up departments like the War Office and the Ministry of Munitions. They would not be tolerated apart from the merits of McKenna’s position, which are very real, by public opinion at the present stage of the War, and yet the difficulties have been created, the impasse has resulted without McKenna’s consulting any of his colleagues—indeed I fear from my own experience that there is great reason to believe that he has misrepresented the case to his colleagues.

“Great resentment will inevitably be felt if public discussion ensues upon a situation which has been incurred by one Minister who has not chosen, by reason of his own self-confidence, to seek support either from his colleagues or from his clientèle, even although one or the other might have agreed with him in the steps he has taken. The fact emerges that despite efficiency and ability of great value to the Government, McKenna is a bad colleague.

“It has always seemed to me to be my duty despite my personal likings and dislikings to work with any colleague whom it pleases the Prime Minister to ask me to work with, but I cannot regard as loyal to the Prime Minister the difficulties which McKenna makes with Lloyd George. It is well-known that they dislike each other personally: it is well-known that they make the fatal error of doing their work surrounded by their own particular choice of press-men: but McKenna shows himself small in his everlasting objections, often petty and always badly stage-managed, to anything that Lloyd George proposes. We had evidence of this at the War Committee on Saturday, and in these circumstances, although I have only one desire—to help the Prime Minister—I do not know what to recommend. Things cannot go on as they are at the Treasury. I cannot see how to retrieve them with McKenna as Chancellor of the Exchequer. I cannot bear to see Lloyd George’s complaints of badness of colleagueship absolutely substantiated, despite the enormous errors of L.G.’s conduct and policy, but this is going on from day to day, and I cannot see any sort of light on the situation except McKenna’s resignation, which for reasons of friendship

I am more than loth to contemplate, or the following:

“(1) That the Prime Minister should come to an understanding with McKenna that he will not tolerate his policy of enmity to Lloyd George.

“(2) That the Prime Minister should see Lloyd George and McKenna together, tell Lloyd George that he has stated this to McKenna and ask them there and then to shake hands in the determination of maintaining unity.

“That it should be a condition of peace that McKenna should be re-inforced by a representative committee of his colleagues which he should be instructed to keep informed of matters of importance.

“I know that the Prime Minister will hate these steps. They cannot be done on his behalf by anyone else. It is the only alternative I can see to McKenna’s resignation.”



## CHAPTER VIII

### *The Fall of Asquith (December 1916)*

Aet. 37

MONTAGU was at the centre of the political crisis which led to the fall of Asquith in the first week of December 1916. The full story has been told by Lord Beaverbrook in his *Politicians and the War*, and in telling the story he made use of a detailed account of the crisis which Montagu wrote on 9 December.

It is a curious story, for both Liberals and many Unionists wished to resist Lloyd George's attempts to dominate the Government; neither Party set out to make him Prime Minister, nor did Lloyd George himself expect or aim at this, yet within a few days, Asquith fell and Lloyd George succeeded him.

Montagu enumerates several reasons for the crisis:

"Those who wanted a coup had a perfect atmosphere for it. The cessation of operations on the Somme, the fall of Bukharest, the disaster at Athens,<sup>1</sup> had produced a profound atmosphere of depression in England, or at any rate in London, and this was a contributory cause.

"Next there was a conviction among all the Prime Minister's colleagues that he was a bad Chairman of the Committee. I cannot charge myself with disloyalty to him, and yet I agree that among disputants he is too patient. Long Cabinet training and experience made him treat the War Committee as a Cabinet, giving all persons the right to express their opinion as lengthily as they liked, and not paying sufficient attention to the paramount necessity of getting decisions as quickly as possible and getting through the Agenda.

"Finally, the two great men of England were being slowly but surely pushed apart. If Asquith did not desire the assistance of Lloyd George, a decision to that effect ought to have been taken long ago and they ought to have separated. But neither of them is

<sup>1</sup> Fighting between the Allies and Greek Royalist troops.

complete, I think, in war without the other. Asquith's incomparable capacity for mastering a particular case at once, detecting the vital considerations, discarding the bad arguments and giving a clear and right decision, is only equalled by Lloyd George's good conduct of affairs in a meeting or conference and fertile, ever-working imagination and constructive power. They worked together in complete harmony. Lloyd George's ideas were nearly always acceptable to Asquith. George was always ready to defer to Asquith's sounder judgment. George yearned for Asquith's confidence and was never happier than when working with him or when alone with him. These two together, with the other smaller men, would have carried this war uninterruptedly to a successful conclusion. What has brought them apart? The unfortunate circumstances in which each had friends who were enemies of the other. Carson and Northcliffe [who owned *The Times*], were always with Lloyd George. Northcliffe loathed Asquith partly because of his contempt for the press, and partly because Asquith had always refused to meet him or speak to him—had just ignored him. McKenna [Chancellor of the Exchequer] disliked and was very jealous of George. Unswervingly loyal to Asquith, his loyalty took the form of endeavouring to create a quarrel between Asquith and George, of endeavouring to drive George out of the Government, and of pursuing, from fear of George, the very policy which Asquith deliberately had discarded, that of separating the two men.

“Northcliffe and McKenna, then, worked hard against Asquith's and George's desire, and against men like Reading and myself, who throughout the time have tried to bring them closer together. They have won: we have failed: and the country in its direst hour has to avail itself of Lloyd George's capacity in the position where I do not think he is best used, and loses the unimpaired judgment, the firm courage, the unruffled, imperturbable steadiness of Asquith.

“Now I proceed to relate the incidents as they occurred.

“Everybody had begun to agree, as I have said, that a new War Committee was necessary. The Prime Minister would have proposed one on Friday, December 1st. The Cabinet had adopted [on November 29th] a proposal of Robert Cecil's,<sup>2</sup> which I thought

<sup>2</sup> Viscount Cecil of Chelwood (1864-1959), Parliamentary Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1915-16; Assistant Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1918; Minister of Blockade, 1916-18; Lord Privy Seal, 1923-24; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1924-27.



was a bad one, for a Civil Committee, and the Prime Minister had determined to have a new War Committee on which McKenna would not have had a place and even to risk McKenna's resignation. He had also agreed that the Cabinet should not meet again during the war, and that the Heads of Departments should not regard themselves as responsible for policy.

"On Friday December 1st Lloyd George proposed to Asquith a War Committee of three, the War Secretary, the First Lord of the Admiralty and a Minister without Portfolio. Asquith replied that the Prime Minister must be included in the War Committee and be its Chairman, but Lloyd George rejected Asquith's proposal."

On that evening Montagu and his wife met Lloyd George at a dinner at which Lord Cunliffe, Governor of the Bank of England, and Lord Reading were present, but Lord Beaverbrook appeared in the distance, beckoned to Lloyd George and carried him off to see Bonar Law.

The next day, Saturday 2 December Montagu breakfasted with Reading, and in the afternoon Montagu and Reading went to see Lloyd George, but "could not shake him from his determination to insist upon the Chairmanship of the War Committee and the removal of Balfour from the Admiralty."

Montagu then wrote to Asquith:

"My dear Prime Minister,

"The situation is probably irretrievably serious. I have just come from L. G., with whom I have spent an hour of hard fighting, but it seems to me to be of no avail and I fear he has committed himself. I have done everything in my power and you know that Rufus has also done his best. Rufus has been with him throughout and I left him there. He says that he submitted proposals to you which are not acceptable to you, and that you have submitted proposals to him which are not acceptable to him. We then tried to arrange a compromise, but so far none is possible. . . . He says that you as Prime Minister, with the House of Commons on your shoulders, with appointments to attend to and with the thousand and one duties of the Prime Minister, should be relieved of the day to day work of the War Committee, but should maintain the supreme control of the War, seeing the Chairman of the War Committee every morning

before it met, receiving their reports and conferring with them when you thought fit. He says that your duties prevent sufficiently frequent sittings and that by this means quicker decisions would be arrived at. He does not for one moment regard it as possible for the War Committee without the Prime Minister to challenge the Prime Minister's supreme control of the War, but he regards it as essential that the small War Committee should sit so frequently and act with such rapidity that the Prime Minister, whoever he were, ought not to have a place upon it, but he is loud in his assertions that you are the right Prime Minister in the right place. He will not budge from this position and I cannot do anything more.

"Audacious as I am of advice, I am at a loss to give any. I receive very bitter letters from Margot, but I have not had time or courage to answer them. She, like McKenna, attributes everything that has appeared in the Press to L. G., notwithstanding the fact that the views in the Press are nearly all inconsistent with L. G.'s scheme.

"I remain of opinion, unshakeable and based not only on affection, but on conviction, that there is no conceivable Prime Minister but you. I remain of opinion that Lloyd George is an invaluable asset to any War Government. His brain is the most fertile we possess. The speeches that he will make will, in my opinion, not only make it impossible for the Government to carry on, but will plunge this country into recrimination and public debate in the face of the enemy which will hearten them up and shake to its foundations the Alliance. Added to this, I think it would be quite impossible, if Lloyd George and Lord Derby go,—and they are going together,—for Bonar Law to remain.

"You may entertain your own opinion. I have expressed mine of the vital mistake that Lloyd George is making in plunging the country into this condition, but it is for you as Prime Minister, I assume, to try and prevent this. I cannot believe that this can be done by the mere publication of two formal letters, and I think it ought to be attempted by prolonged conversations rather than risk the events which I foresee.

"It is all a nightmare to me. So far as I can discover, in matters of policy you and Lloyd George are in complete agreement. In matters of mutual confidence there is not much which I desire. The Government will break up on matters of machinery, but the argument will be that through this very machinery the situation in



Roumania, Serbia, etc. has resulted, and even the financial situation, and it will be said that the Government was broken up deliberately by L. G. and his friends because they saw no prospect of improvement—and curiously enough on this side of the question he will be supported by the soldiers who have been suborning the Press.

“I am willing to do anything you suggest, but I can do nothing more without your orders.

“E. S. M.”

“The Right Hon. H. H. Asquith, K. C., M. P.”

A compromise was formulated by Eric Drummond and Lord Reading with slight emendations by Montagu; Bonham Carter took this to Asquith who had gone to Walmer.

On Sunday 3 December Asquith returned to town; Montagu lunched with him and Asquith said that he thought he could accept the compromise formula:

“then came Bonar Law, who told him that the Unionists had decided to resign. Asquith asked him if it would affect their decision if he came to an arrangement with Lloyd George. Bonar Law replied that he thought not, but would go back to them if Asquith wished. Incredible as it may seem, Bonar Law at first gave the impression that the Unionists wished to replace Asquith by Lloyd George and only in the course of conversation and of a further talk with Curzon, Robert Cecil and Austen Chamberlain did it appear that the Unionists wished the Government to be reconstructed under Asquith.”

Asquith dined with Montagu and from his house issued the Press Notice that he was going to reconstruct his Government.

The next morning, Monday 4 December, Montagu saw Lloyd George. “He said” Montagu recorded, “that he had breakfasted with Derby and Carson and that they had agreed that I ought to be Chancellor of the Exchequer. I told him that I did not think that I could do this job, and that I did not wish to leave the Ministry of Munitions.”

Montagu then went to see Asquith and found that he had completely changed his mind. He had been infuriated by an article in *The Times* that morning, from which he inferred, quite wrongly, that Lloyd George had conspired with Northcliffe, the owner of *The Times*. Montagu tried in vain to re-make the peace.

Meanwhile the Press Notice that the Government was to be re-constituted had come as a bombshell to Asquith's Liberal colleagues, since, with the exception of Lord Crewe, Lord Reading and Montagu, they had been kept completely in the dark. In the afternoon Asquith saw these Liberal colleagues, who all objected to the proposed compromise with Lloyd George and this encouraged Asquith to reject it and placed a further obstacle in the way of Montagu's efforts to reconcile Asquith and Lloyd George.

Asquith dined with Montagu, but refused to discuss the situation.

The following day events moved fast. Asquith wrote<sup>3</sup> to Lloyd George rejecting his proposals; and thereupon Lloyd George resigned and then the Unionist members also resigned.

Montagu at this point wrote in great distress to Asquith as follows:

"My dear Prime Minister,

"I am shortly going to see you, but I imagine in the company of my colleagues, and in case I do not have an opportunity of talking with you, I must trouble you to read the following:

"I do not believe there is anybody who is feeling such anguish as I am feeling at the present moment. I do not want you to cease to be Prime Minister because I am certain that any other Prime Minister cannot succeed. At the same time,—you may think that I am mistaken, foolish, under the charm, or anything you like,—but I cannot think of a Government conducting the war without Lloyd George. Whatever office he has held, despite his obvious defects, during the war he has rendered services to the country which cannot be minimised. My friends who know that I urged you to send him to the War Office taunt me with what is described as his failure there because of his quarrels with the soldiers. But they are with him now, and he has achieved at least one thing in the War Office, which if the war goes on next year will save our armies from destruction; I mean his belated success in getting the army to attend to their railway communications and thus to avert the consequences of a breakdown of French transport. He is most valuable on the War Committee and his ever-active brain has suggested to you policies and measures in which you have been in agreement with him. His uncontrolled conduct of the war is un-

<sup>3</sup> Quoted in Lloyd George's *War Memoirs*, pp. 990-92.



thinkable, but a combination of you and him is what every thinking man in the country requires.

“I have had some experience of the same sort of thing here, if I may compare small things with great. I found lack of co-ordination when I came here and after considering all sorts of alternatives, such as Boards of Directors, Committees over which I should preside, I formed a Committee which is really my general staff. I was warned that it would upset my authority, that I must be Chairman myself. I refused all this advice, I reserve the power of veto and of initiative, the Committee works from day to day and is speedy in the despatch of business. I have the confidence, I think, of the whole office, and I am certain that Lloyd George’s authority in it was not greater than mine today.

“I should never have consented to advise you to accept this proposal if I had felt that it would undermine your authority, and therefore it is no use elaborating this point. What has broken down the arrangement? What has caused your withdrawal of your own proposals? I see three causes:

“(1) Northcliffe’s article in *The Times*. It is lamentable to think that you should let him achieve the victory that he has long sought. He wanted to drive you out; he alone is fool enough not to believe in you. His efforts were resisted by Lloyd George, by Bonar Law, by Lord Derby, by Carson, by Robertson. Using information that he had no right to obtain, he sees a chance of success, takes it and is successful. He published that article in order to wreck the arrangement and you have let him do it. I do not say that this was avoidable, but I say that his personal victory in this matter is a matter of the deepest possible chagrin to me.

“(2) The advice given you by McKenna, Runciman and Grey. That advice could have been foreseen. It came in my opinion rather late, when you had already made your offer to Lloyd George. Grey always wants to resign when there are complications. It is his pretty little way of assisting matters. Runciman is merely a reflection of McKenna, and McKenna’s loyalty to you is above suspicion but always unwise, because he hates Lloyd George, whom you deliberately chose as your colleague and kept as your colleague, as much, if not more than he likes you. He can only see one object to be achieved, to drive Lloyd George out of the Government, and he takes no view but that. Far be it from me to underrate McKenna’s

abilities or the importance of his position, but he has irritated the Allies and the City and quarrelled with his best advisers, and if you had to choose between Lloyd George and McKenna, there is little doubt as to whom you could best do without, whichever is the best character.

“(3) The question of personnel. Lloyd George wanted Carson in. I think his main object was loyalty to Bonar Law, who had been working with him and who feels acutely the position in which his Party is being split by Carson’s rival leadership. Carson is leader of the Opposition, and at a time when you are reconstructing your Government, surely to make a new Coalition in order to help Bonar Law and the Parliamentary situation, it is not a very unknown thing to take in the most conspicuous Opposition leader. But Lloyd George, I know now, would have been more accommodating than I imagined on personnel and would have given way certainly about Balfour.

“However all this is over, and I am confronted with a position in which I see no help for it but your resignation and a Government which must split the country in the face of the enemy from top to bottom. Both these facts are horrible to contemplate. A government which you do not lead means disaster. A split country means victory for the enemy.

“I therefore feel it my duty to tell you, because I want to do nothing behind your back, what I have done. Lloyd George sent for me this afternoon and I spent some time with him. I found him in almost as great a condition of misery and unhappiness as I am myself. Believe me or not as you will, he wanted to work with you. He did not want a victory for Northcliffe. He was completely satisfied with the arrangements you had come to and meant to work them loyally. He does not want, I am confident, to be Prime Minister. I told him that I could do nothing more, that I had done everything I could and that my feeling of despair was such that I wished most devoutly that I had never entered public life.

“I have worked persistently since 1906 with the sole idea, according to my own views, of helping to preserve, extend and make successful your control of British politics. I have failed and I know nothing left for me to do.

“I then saw Lord Derby, who is also miserable and who was on his way to see you. We had a long talk. He also believes im-



plicitly that you and Lloyd George must work together. I told him that I thought *he* could do something which I could not do. I told him that he was a man of unchallenged integrity and above suspicion of intrigue. He also enjoyed the King's personal friendship. I urged him to tell the King that in his opinion it was disastrous to the country that you and Lloyd George should be separated, that the King should not try and find an alternative Prime Minister, but that he should send for you and George together and he himself endeavour to arrange an accommodation between you. I know that George would be willing because he is not so foolish as to want to try the impossible. That is all that I can do. I ask your forgiveness for my part in all this. I may have given you advice which you think to have been wrong now or in the past. I am sorry that I have failed, but looking back throughout the whole history of your Government, I can charge myself with never having taken any action which I did not from the bottom of my heart think was in your interests.

“E.S.M.”

Montagu's narrative continues:

“At a meeting of the Liberal members of the Cabinet it was agreed that the Prime Minister should resign. I urged him not to resign, but to suggest to the King that he should send for Asquith, George, Bonar Law and Henderson, to try and agree a National Government under the leadership of Asquith. My suggestion was derided, and McKenna most helpfully asked me if I wanted four Prime Ministers, or, if not, which one I wanted. (I had already suggested to Derby that he should urge the King to send for George and Asquith together, but I added the other two at the meeting of the Liberal members of the Government because I thought he ought to see the leaders of the four parties.)

“That night the Shadow Cabinet dined with me, and I put to them my idea of a Conference. Hankey went off to see Stamfordham [the King's Private Secretary], Young<sup>4</sup> went off to see Henderson, and later Hankey and Masterton Smith went to see George.

“On Wednesday, December 6th I went to breakfast with George, who was still anxious to go back to the Sunday arrangement. He

<sup>4</sup> Henderson's Private Secretary.

was even willing, on representations from Masterton, to keep Balfour at the Admiralty for a short time. He was quite willing to go into conference, and willing to suggest it to the King if he were sent for, but he was quite confident that he could form a Government if he had to. He still preferred not to have to, but to serve under Asquith. (There was never any doubt expressed by the Liberal members of the Cabinet that if he tried he could form a Government). He asked me what had occurred at the meeting yesterday, and said he had heard that we all resolved not to serve in a Government of which he was the head. I replied that there was no such resolution, but I thought it would be very difficult for any of us to come in.

“He went off to see Balfour and Bonar Law about the suggested Conference, and sent for me to come and see him at the War Office at about twenty minutes to twelve, where I met Bonar Law just off to see the King. Apparently Bonar Law had objected to any Conference to put Asquith back, saying that the country would never stand it after Asquith had broken up his Government and resigned because he refused to accept the Lloyd George formula. It would look like vacillation on Asquith’s part and on their part, and he said that Balfour was in agreement with him on this. But he was going to see the King to recommend a Conference at which Asquith should be implored to serve under George or Bonar, whichever he preferred.

“I then asked George whether he wanted any of his Liberal colleagues. He said he did, and I told him that if he would keep Grey at the Foreign Office, I thought he could have any others that he wanted. He said that he would not.

“The Conference at Buckingham Palace took place; its members were Asquith, Bonar Law, Lloyd George, Balfour and Henderson and in the afternoon Asquith again summoned his Liberal Colleagues.”

Crewe records:

“The general course of the discussion there [Buckingham Palace] was described by Asquith. It appears that at the opening there was some expression of opinion by the two alternative Prime Ministers that Mr. Asquith should endeavour to continue; but both, when asked by him if he could claim their assistance in any capacity,



declared that this was impossible. Mr Lloyd George, however, urged Mr. Asquith to attempt to form a Government from among his own supporters. It was next discussed whether, if Mr. Bonar Law or Mr. Lloyd George became Prime Minister, Mr. Asquith would serve under either. Both Mr. Balfour and Mr. Henderson [representative of Labour in the War Cabinet, December 1916 till August 1917], hoped that he would do so, and the King may have also favoured this course: Mr. Asquith . . . decided to consult his friends before replying."

Crewe relates that another meeting of Liberal ex-Ministers and Henderson was called that evening. It was agreed that it would not be possible to form a Government with no Unionist members and with Lloyd George in opposition. It was not discussed whether Asquith should serve under Bonar Law or under Lloyd George.

"Mr. Henderson began by strongly urging the adhesion of Mr. Asquith, in order that a truly National Government might be formed. The only other Minister sharing this opinion was Mr. Montagu, who held that the prestige of Mr. Asquith ought not to be lost to the country."

Both Lloyd George and Bonar Law declined to serve under Asquith, and Asquith, after consulting his friends, declined to serve under Lloyd George or Bonar Law.

"The Liberals all agreed", Montagu records, "that Asquith was not to take office and it was inferred that none of us would. Henderson and I both dissented and expressed our dissent from the view that he should not take office. He communicated his refusal to Bonar Law, and since then I have not seen George, but I have been most miserable."

Meanwhile the Unionist Ministers had met in Bonar Law's room at the Colonial Office. Curzon crossed the road to No. 10 Downing Street and was informed of Asquith's inability to serve under Lloyd George or Bonar Law. Lloyd George then obtained the support of Bonar Law and this was followed by the support of other Unionists, and thus he became Prime Minister.

The members of the War Cabinet were Lloyd George, Bonar Law,

Curzon, Carson and two Ministers without Portfolio, Henderson (later G. N. Barnes) and Lord Milner.

Montagu's narrative continues as follows:

"I desire to place it on record that I have not received any offer to join George's Government, but I know that this is because George did not want a refusal, and that if at any time I had sent him a message to say that I would come in, I should have been invited to join. I fear that I would not have been offered to remain where I am, but I gather that as Bonar Law insisted on the Exchequer, I was to go to the India Office. I should not have cared to do this, because it has no connection with the war. Meanwhile I find no common cause with my colleagues for refusing to join George's Government. They do not believe in George: I do. They felt that their resentment at the methods by which the Government had been formed ought to make them keep out of it. I felt the resentment too, but did not feel it ought to weigh with me in refusing. The one reason that I can put forward as a justification for keeping out is that my relations with Asquith and my affection for him would prevent me from doing my work in the new Government if I were haunted by the fear that I had deserted him in his needs. But the conviction is growing in me more and more that I cannot work with the organised Liberal Party which contains within its ranks so many people with whom I am in profound disagreement. I must confess that although I was deeply moved at the Liberal Club Party meeting on Friday, at Asquith's firm hold on the affections of the whole Liberal Party, I did not come away with any renewed confidence in the future, nor with the conviction that the arrangement had broken down on right grounds. I felt that it ought to have been avoided, that the victory for Northcliffe ought never to have been given, and that the separation of Asquith and George, who are in such large agreement, is more than ever to-day a disaster for the nation. The best form of Government is Asquith and George; failing that, I believe the best form of Government is George.

"I was much tempted to go away from the meeting to George and say I would come in, but I did not do so for this reason. It would have been construed both by his friends and by mine to mean that I had vacillated and waited till the Government was certain



to be formed, and then come in when I was taking no risks. Therefore I should be a source of weakness rather than of strength to the Government . . . I mean to support it vigorously, and I mean to find work under its auspices outside it.<sup>5</sup> I am naturally very unhappy at leaving the Ministry. It is an Office which I have enjoyed more than I could have dreamt possible of any office. You achieve results, you see results there. It is not a mere matter of discussion. It is a wonderful organisation, and a standing tribute to Lloyd George. I leave on the whole much satisfied with my work there, although it is incomplete. It did not want the farewells which I have taken of my friends there to make me realise that I had succeeded in obtaining their confidence. It is, I am sure, better organised and moving far more together than it did when I came there. We have had plenty of disputes with other Departments. We have always won, without exception. Man Power, Air Board, Agricultural Implements, Tanks, Rifles for Roumania, Inter-Ally Purchasing Bureau,—in everything we have been on the right side. We are on the way to solving a considerable problem. I wish I had been there to finish.

“I am rejoiced to think that Addison succeeds me. He is popular, very hard-working, and of very good judgment. If I have any doubts as to his capacity to hold his own with other Departments, or as to his choice of men, I am on the other hand quite convinced that opportunities of supreme control will mend all this.

“As regards the new Government, it seems to me to have been mainly formed on the right lines. I rejoice to think that young Liberals are in it. We must see that it does not result in the removal of Lloyd George from Liberal forces. I have not much opinion of Bonar Law. I do not know Milner or Carson. But the experiment of putting business men as heads of the Government Departments is to my mind an admirable one. I hope that the Northcliffe Press will be obliterated by this Government; the old Government could not do it. If I have one anxiety, it is about the administrative capacity of some of the new Ministers, particularly the Labour men and I fear they will do too much in re-organising the nation, thus

<sup>5</sup> Added by Montagu in manuscript: I was astounded at the paragraph in Asquith's speech (about “if you think you are serving your country, go into the new Government”). He never said anything of the kind before. If he had, I should have felt bound to be in the new Government.

distracting their attention and the attention of the country for a few months from the prosecution of the war, but if the House of Commons helps them, it may be possible to avoid this, and, so far as I know their policy, most of what they want to do is necessary.

“E. S. MONTAGU

“Saturday, 9th December, 1916”

On 8 December 1916 Duff Cooper records:

“Dined with Diana, Edwin and Venetia at Queen Anne’s Gate. Edwin was in the depths of depression and could talk of nothing but the political situation. He is miserable that he had to resign and thinks he might have avoided it. I don’t think he could have. He is very fond of Lloyd George and hates all the other Liberals. He was especially bitter about McKenna. He says that all might have been well if it hadn’t been for McKenna and Margot on the one side dragging Asquith away from Lloyd George, and Harmsworth and Hedley Le Bas dragging Lloyd George away from Asquith.”<sup>6</sup>

Lord Beaverbrook relates that, after all the principal posts had been settled, Bonar Law on 13 December 1916 offered Montagu the post of Financial Secretary to the Treasury which he refused, saying: “It is with great regret that the events of the last fortnight have placed me in such a position that I do not think that I would be of much use, if I accepted. For this reason I must decline, but I need, I hope, not assure you that I wish you and the Government the greatest possible good fortune and that I hope soon to find means of proving my support and desire to assist.”

<sup>6</sup> *Old Men Forget*, p. 59.



## CHAPTER IX

### *Reconstruction Committee (January - July 1917)*

Aet. 38

IN JANUARY 1917 Montagu was appointed by Lloyd George to be Vice-Chairman and acting Chief of the Reconstruction Committee, of which George himself was titular Chairman. Its work was advisory, and not executive, and the Sub-Committees were hampered by the fact that their members were very busy people. The work attracted Montagu. He wrote on 25 January 1917 to Asquith:

"I am very sorry I cannot come down to Freshwater to see you. I have been very busy trying to get the Reconstruction work started. Lloyd George says that, subject to the consent of the Cabinet, he will hand it over to me and is delighted at the prospect of having Bony to work there. [Sir Maurice Bonham Carter was Assistant Secretary in the Ministry of Reconstruction in 1917] Nash assures me that the idea of my doing it meets with your approval and I think we shall be a very happy party and do useful work."

The rest of the letter is a plea to Asquith to try to avoid a split in the Liberal Party:

"Nobody can predict", Montagu wrote, "if the split occurs, in what direction it will occur. It may be that the Lloyd George part of the Liberal Party will be very small. It may be that it will be very big. Nobody, I think, thinks that it will be a majority. But whatever its size, it will be a pity of the first magnitude if and when parties resume their normal peace avocations.

"At any rate, it ought to be a split upon policy, for I am confident that whatever the Liberal Party in the country thinks of the way in which the Government was formed, nobody now is interested in what to us is a personal question. It would be terrible to have party strife based on persons, however great our respect or affection may be for those who have been wronged.

“If I am right in all this, we ought, in my opinion, whatever the provocation, to avoid accepting a challenge or forcing a split. I hear that the Liberal Whip’s Office is forcing upon Associations and upon candidates the question: ‘Are you an Asquithite or a Lloyd Georgite?’ Now as I understand the Reform Club policy, there is no room for this antithesis. It is not a question that anybody ought to be asked to answer. Asquith is leader of the Liberal Party and the Liberal Party are supporting Lloyd George’s Government.”

In February 1917 Montagu made repeated, but unsuccessful efforts to see Lloyd George. So he wrote to him a seventeen-page letter. He began by proposing to send weekly letters commenting on the current political situation in the same way as he had written weekly comments to Asquith in 1906-10.

“It has been a good week for the Government”, Montagu wrote. “I was one of those who were inclined to believe that Carson’s appointment to the Admiralty was a mistake. . . Everything I hear of him tells me that he is certainly not to be judged by his face; that so far from being relentless, morose, savage, illtempered, stubborn, hard, he is kindly, benevolent, sentimental, sympathetic, generous. Certainly his speech in the House was good.”

Montagu suggested that if the submarine trouble became very serious, the Admiralty should be ready to attack Borkum; also that the system of convoy might be thoroughly considered. Montagu went on to renew his plea for a Ministry of Supply to be responsible for naval supplies, instead of sailors and civil servants.

Leaving Carson and the Admiralty, Montagu turned to the Home Secretary (Cave). “For the technicalities of a Bill, you could not have a better man. The old government had its Samuel and its Simon. . . . You have at least already discovered your Cave.”

It appears that Lloyd George had offered to Montagu the post of Minister of National Service, to which Neville Chamberlain was appointed, and that Montagu had refused. For this letter expresses Montagu’s disappointment with the Government’s slowness to introduce compulsory National Service, and adds, “I do not mean that I complain; I do not mean that if I had accepted your offer



of Chamberlain's job, the result would have been very different." . . . "The real key of all your trouble is labour," Montagu wrote. "There are regiments of men servants still in domestic service, there are people tending gardens and flowers and so on."

After elaborating on the theme that industries which are subsidised should be liable to Excess Profits duty, Montagu recurs to a suggestion made in a previous letter that Lloyd George should form his own National Party and not allow himself to be stolen from Liberalism by orthodox Conservatism. Montagu believed that the younger Liberals and the younger Conservatives were progressives. "These two, coupled with the best elements of Labour, which has so long sought intelligent leadership and policy, ought to make a fine National Party under your Leadership. Such a Party would not contain Massingham and McKenna; such a Party would not, I think, contain Curzon, Chamberlain and Salisbury. But such a Party would contain all the people who want to get a move on."

Finally Montagu turned to Ireland. He recapitulated the unhappy story since the Rebellion of 1915 and pleaded for a renewed attempt at a settlement on lines which the Viceroy, he understood, had suggested, but which Carson had refused to discuss.

History does not relate whether Lloyd George ever read this long letter; but many of the measures advocated by Montagu, such as the system of convoys and compulsory national service, excess profits taxation and a settlement with Ireland were adopted in the first or second World Wars. But his hope that Lloyd George would lead a new National Party consisting of all those who wanted to get a move on was not fulfilled.

On 31 March Montagu, although he was no longer a Minister and had had no official connection with India for three years, submitted his views on India to the War Cabinet. India, he pointed out, had been very loyal, indeed surprisingly loyal, in the War and would expect to be rewarded after the War. Economic concessions would not be enough. An announcement of policy must be made as to the future political developments.

"There is nothing that the Indian people want more than a goal to which to look. . . . Now I believe that the actual goal, however distant, however difficult of attainment, is some form of self-go-

vernment with complete representative institutions. Opinions may differ as to how far this is an immediate prospect. I believe it to be remote, but that it is our goal, and that some approximation to it must be our aim I have not the slightest doubt. . . .

“Surely the right aim and object is a federated series of states and provinces, possibly with completely different constitutions and varying degrees of liberty and self-control at varying times, suited to the conditions of each state or province.”

As the next step Montagu outlined a system of ‘diarchy’ much like that adopted by the Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms to be described later. He concluded: “I would implore the Cabinet before it is too late to set up a Reconstruction Committee for India—not a committee composed of people with Indian experience, chosen because they remember what used to happen in the days of Lord Dufferin, but a committee of liberal minded men who will approach this problem with a view to seeing what action ought to be taken in the days of King George V and continued in the reigns of his successors.” Perhaps this eloquent peroration was not the best start for discussing Indian Reforms with Curzon, but Montagu’s views as a whole were close to those which had been or were being formed by the Secretary of State, Austen Chamberlain, and the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford.

A letter to Venetia of 6 April 1917 contains no grumbles except at having to celebrate Passover. “I never knew what it was to be happy till you came to me and its now all bliss, bless you. . . . Breakfasted this morning with L. G. All family up from Wales some coundn’t speak English at all or understand it. Breakfast consisted of ducks eggs brought from Wales by his brother who called him Tafydd.”

In this month, April 1917, Lloyd George suggested that Montagu should join the Government. Montagu knew that this would be regarded as an act of black treachery by Margot Asquith and indeed by Asquith himself; but he had for some time longed to get back to office. It was not to India that his mind turned, since he preferred a post more vitally connected with the conduct of the War. He set out his position in a letter to Lloyd George on 1 May, 1917:

“... I have been for some time, as you know, ready to throw in my



political destinies with yours in the hope and belief that you, if any man can, will lead this country through victory to a better state of affairs than it has known in the past, and in the desire that I should be in some humble way associated with you.

“I have never ceased to regret that circumstances which we have often discussed led to a break in the association—a break which has now existed for six months and which I am anxious to see terminated.

“Therefore when you suggested to me last week a possibility of joining your Government, I was very glad. Apart from reasons that affect myself, I do think that your Government would be better, if I may say so, for the inclusion of new Liberal blood. After all, with the exception of the Ministry of Munitions [Addison] all the most important offices under you are held by Conservatives. (I do not forget Henderson as Labour Representative on the War Cabinet.) And I feel that nothing could help you more materially in the present position than to give evidence, by the inclusion of a Liberal or Liberals, that you were looking for support as much from the old Liberal Party as from the old Conservative Party, if not more.

“Besides this I am constantly thinking of your position and something that you said to me some time ago, that you felt your own isolation, that you had no colleagues who were your friends, who thought as you thought, has left a great impression on my memory. I do not remember how long ago it was, but you pointed out that fond as you were of Henderson, he was really more a delegate of Labour than an independent politician, that Bonar Law thought very much in terms of the Conservative Party, and that you had not much in common with Milner or Curzon.

“I determined, when you said this, that I should be only too proud if I could in some small degree supply the deficiency.

“The suggestion that I might possibly go to the Exchequer seemed to me to be a good one. I am intimately acquainted with the Exchequer, now for ten years, indeed I think this Budget which is to be introduced tomorrow is the first Budget since 1906 which imposes taxation with the preparation of which I have had no concern whatever. I have been at the Treasury, too, during the war, which is very important, and one of my pleasantest recollections is the degree of confidence which I seem to have established among

people in the City with whom the Treasury had to deal, Cunliffe, Cokayne, Revelstoke<sup>1</sup> and so forth. Moreover I could not forget that you suggested me for the Exchequer with, as you told me, the concurrence of Derby and Carson just before you began to form your Government.

“Finally, I have twice been offered the Financial Secretaryship by Bonar Law, and therefore in a period which would deal with such questions as Excess profits, Loans, Treasury Bills and so forth, I was not surprised at the idea that was running in your head.

“This morning you seemed, at any rate tentatively, to have come to the conclusion that the best arrangement would be to send Chamberlain to the Treasury and ask me to go to the India Office.

“Will you be patient with me if I ask you to reconsider this from my point of view and from the point of view of the Government? I do not think Chamberlain is doing the India Office well; but I fear you may be setting up for yourself something even more dangerous at the Treasury. The time will come during this war, and must certainly come at the end, when finance must be tackled boldly and possibly in an unorthodox way. Large schemes of taxation may be ruthlessly necessary. A generous Treasury may be our only method of avoiding a revolution. You must not have so Conservative a Conservative in charge of the Nation’s purse,—a man with so few ideas as Chamberlain possesses. His efficient, humdrum mind will, I think, tend to make him a public danger at the Treasury. Remember that he will accept his policy almost entirely from Bradbury and Keynes, who is a great friend of his.

“From the point of view of the Government I would remind you that Liberalism for its reassurance requires what is regarded as an important office to be filled by a Liberal, and by important I mean important from the point of view of the war. This object will not be achieved by putting a new Liberal at the India Office, and giving the Exchequer to an orthodox exponent of Conservatism. The Chamberlain family is not at the moment popular with the Liberal Party, and I think Chamberlain’s appointment would be considered provocative to them.

“The offices that count in the war are the Exchequer, the

<sup>1</sup> Governor and Deputy Governor of the Bank of England and head of Baring’s respectively.



Admiralty, the War Office, the Foreign Office, the Ministry of Munitions. You might put Chamberlain at the Admiralty if anything happened to Carson, but the only important office held by a Liberal is the Ministry of Munitions, and that of course has never been the same office since you were there.

"I do not think that it would strengthen you from the point of view of Liberal opinion in the country if a new Conservative replaced an old Conservative in the most important of the offices, and the new Liberal is put in what will not be considered, from the point of view of the war, an important office.

"Then too, from my point of view—I want, if I may, to be by your side. I want to have intimate relations with you and to be concerned with the war. The opportunity of relieving the isolation to which you referred in the conversation I have quoted above will not present itself at the India Office. I am, as you know, profoundly interested in Indian affairs. My anxiety to serve India and to see that India gets what she deserves at this crisis is very great. But I do not think it can be done from the India Office. A Viceroy by threats of resignation can always overcome a reluctant Secretary of State on things that matter to the Indian people: a Secretary of State can never coerce a Viceroy on things that matter to the Indian civilian. Moreover, the Secretary of State for India is tied, swaddled, swathed, manacled by legislation, by the existence of the Council of India, by the rights of its majority.

"I fear that you may be disappointed in the amount that can be done at the India Office without legislation of which, judging from past experience, Curzon would not approve. I am a little doubtful how much more could be accomplished than I have been able to accomplish by outside agitation.

"In a separate letter which is on the way to you I am pointing out what I regard as the failure, or rather the shortcomings, of the present Reconstruction Committee. I think you will have to appoint a Minister of Reconstruction. The Germans have it, and all sorts of outside people like Huth Jackson, Dudley Docker, and many inside people are urging the same thing upon me. I do not know whether this could be combined with any other office, or whether it could be an office held by a Minister without Portfolio with a right to attend the War Cabinet on matters concerning reconstruction.

“That, roughly speaking, is the position. I wanted to put the matter before you before you made up your mind. Of course I will not make difficulties, but from your point of view vis à vis Liberalism, from my point of view in my desire to be closely associated with you and to be engaged in a “war” office, and from the point of view of India, I do not think the plan that you suggested this morning ought to be adopted without these considerations having been weighed.

“I am anxious to be the fore-runner of young Liberals who will flock to your standard. After all, my friendship with Asquith is well known. I am prepared to leave him because I find that I am in agreement with you in your aims and objects and in disagreement with those whom I now find to be my colleagues in the House of Commons. When I come to you, you will be my only political friend in the Coalition Government. Let us have an opportunity of working and sticking together.

“If, however, your judgment differs from mine in these matters, so be it. I could never refuse the India Office if you wanted me there, and my Indian friends would not forgive me if I did. But if I go there, because I feel my opportunity for useful work will not be great, I would ask you to let me, at any rate in the beginning, see if I could not fulfil the functions of a Minister of Reconstruction as well.

“Forgive for the length of this letter. I am yours to command if you would like to see me before you go abroad.

“Yours ever,  
“EDWIN S. MONTAGU”

This letter shows a low opinion of Austen Chamberlain which was soon to be replaced by respect and affection.

After writing this letter Montagu tried to see Lloyd George, but in vain. A Secret Session was to be held on 10 May 1917. Just before this Secret Session (at 12-33 P. M. to be precise) Montagu dictated a record of his own position. The new Chief Whip, F. E. Guest, had urged Lloyd George to include Asquith in his Government and believed that Churchill would urge this at the Secret Session. When this idea was put to Lloyd George he “asked Guest whether his idea was that he should say to Asquith: ‘My Government has failed: I come on my knees to ask you to pull me out of



the hole.' It was obvious to Rufus [Lord Reading, who was present] that George was very much irritated and has got it into his mind that there is a conspiracy on foot to force Asquith upon him. All his old suspicions are aroused." Lloyd George seemed to suspect that Montagu was a party to this conspiracy and the note was written to show how unfounded this suspicion was. But at the end of the note there is a postscript written after the Secret Session. "Secret Session. W. S. C. made a wonderfully good speech admirably answered by L. G. No mention of the plan, ha-ha!"

At the beginning of May Montagu spent a week-end with the Asquiths at the Wharf at Sutton Courtney. They played tennis all day long and politics were not discussed.

"At dinner on Sunday night Margot asked me whether I was not now glad that I was not a member of the Government. I told her that as a man of little courage, the war seemed to me so serious that I was glad to be bereft of responsibility, but that as a man of duty and of conscience I had never since ceased to regret my folly in the muddle which occurred that week at Christmas. She replied that she thought that I had lost the clearness of vision which she had always associated with me and we talked about her hunting experiences as a girl."

During the Secret Session Montagu at last had an opportunity of speaking to Lloyd George.

"On Thursday last during the Secret Session", Montagu recorded, "the Prime Minister asked me to come and speak to him. He told me that Asquith had consented to meet him to discuss Ireland and that Asquith had suggested that they should meet at my house and he asked me if I would ask them both to lunch.

"This gave me at last the opportunity of assuring the Prime Minister that all the suggestions for the inclusion of Asquith in the Government had nothing to do with me.

"Asquith and the Prime Minister lunched with me on Tuesday. I left them immediately after lunch in order that they might have a private conversation, but in a few minutes I was summoned back by the Prime Minister.

"They discussed Ireland and the Prime Minister laid before Asquith his proposal to write a letter to the Irish leaders, a letter

which has now appeared in the papers. He was not hopeful, but he told Asquith that Carson would not consent to offer to the Irish the inclusion of only four counties, but if Redmond were to say that he would accept the scheme provided four were substituted for six, he (Carson) would agree. The suggestion must come from them. My only contribution to the discussion was to tell George that in my opinion Redmond should be given a hint of this at the same time as he received the letter. How far I was successful in ensuring that this should be done I do not know, but it is vital.

“Asquith was absolutely useless and bitterly disappointing. He kept on repeating that in his opinion a settlement must be imposed upon Ireland and that in order to do it the Dominions must be brought in. The Prime Minister told him again and again that the Dominions refused to be used in this matter at all or to burn their fingers, that Borden was dependent upon the Orangemen, that Massey was an Orangeman, that Hughes was not there, and that the only man available was Smuts who refused to go in alone. It seemed to me very little use in the face of these facts for Asquith to keep on making a suggestion which had proved to be impossible. Asquith also explained to the Prime Minister how we should be hampered in our position at the Peace Conference if Ireland was a blot upon our scutcheon, a sore on our body politic. But everybody agrees to that, the only question is how to remove it, and on that he had no suggestion except one that George had tried and found impossible.

“I drove away from lunch very depressed about this insoluble problem, and found, not to my surprise, that George also was disappointed with the lunch.

“The relations between the two men were cordial, and on leaving George asked if he might occasionally have conversations with Asquith on important matters, saying that he knew he could rely on Asquith’s friendship despite everything that had happened. Asquith gladly assented, but once more I am convinced that if you want to use Asquith it must be for judgment upon concrete proposals and that you will never find in him useful suggestions of a constructive kind. The old bird may have been deliberately adopting an attitude?”

Shortly after this Lloyd George appears to have offered Montagu



a choice of (a) Minister of Munitions or (b) Minister without Portfolio in charge of Reconstructions. In reply Montagu wrote as follows:

“House of Commons

“June 11th 1917

“My dear Prime Minister,

“I have naturally to thank you for a very enjoyable afternoon yesterday, for the business you found rare leisure to transact, and for the gratifying suggestions which were the outcome of our conversation and about which I promised to write to you to-day.

“It was suggested by you either that I might return to the Ministry of Munitions on the promotion of Addison—Labour being handed over to the Ministry of Labour so far at any rate as disputes were concerned—(an excellent reform, if I may say so).

“As an alternative it was suggested that you would agree to make me a member of your Cabinet as a Minister without Portfolio [“or salary” deleted] to take charge on behalf of the Government of reconstruction matters in particular and to assist in domestic policy generally. It is not an easy choice to make, but notwithstanding my affection for the Ministry of Munitions and joy with which I would welcome being associated with those there again and notwithstanding the difficulty of seeing a suitable appointment to the Ministry (I think W. E. [Worthington Evans] is not a good idea), the second alternative seems to me to be the one which I would prefer. I hope you will consult Stevenson<sup>2</sup> about the Ministry.

“I have become so absorbed in reconstruction matters that I should welcome the opportunity of continuing the work under even more favourable conditions, while the chance of rendering service in the Cabinet is sufficiently attractive to outweigh the attractions of the Ministry of Munitions.

“You told me yesterday that you proposed to add Smuts to your Cabinet especially for war purposes. I would suggest with great respect that it would be very preferable if the two additions to the Cabinet could be announced together!

“With my real thanks for the new expression of confidence,

“I am, Yours sincerely,

“EDW. S. MONTAGU”

<sup>2</sup> Afterwards Sir James Stevenson, Bart.

The subsequent events were recorded by Montagu as follows:

“It will be remembered that I had definitely accepted the Office of Minister without Portfolio in charge of Reconstruction, and that this appointment was to have been announced together with the appointment of Hayes Fisher at the Local Government Board during Mr. Lloyd George’s visit to Glasgow.

“In my letter of acceptance, however, I asked leave for its postponement until after the Mesopotamian Debate because of my interest in India.

“The Prime Minister assented to this. I saw him during the intervening time. I begged him not to make up his mind to send Chamberlain to India and I asked him to consider Lord Grey, an idea that appealed to him. I told him that I proposed to give Chamberlain orders as to the way I thought Indian Government ought to be reformed in the Mesopotamian Debate. He told me he thought Hardinge would resign, that Chamberlain, he was glad to say, was full of reforms and had no idea of resigning.”

On 12 July 1917 Montagu made a speech in the debate on the Report of the Mesopotamian Commission, which had censured the Government of India for failing to equip and supply adequately General Nixon’s army in the attack on Baghdad. Montagu put the blame on the too rigid character of the statute-ridden Government of India. “The Government of India is too wooden, too iron, too inelastic, too anti-diluvian to be of any use for the modern purposes we have in view.” The House of Commons took no interest in Indian affairs and the Secretary of State is not his own master and can be over-ruled by a majority of the Council. “The whole system of the India Office is designed to prevent control by the House of Commons for fear there might be too advanced a Secretary of State.”

The Executive System of India must be reorganised, with less control by Westminster and Whitehall and more responsibility to the people of India. Montagu did not believe that there was any demand in India for complete Home Rule and he did not believe it to be possible.

“As a goal, I see a different picture: I see the great self-governing



Dominions and Provinces of India organised and co-ordinated with the great Principalities—,not one great Home Rule country, but a series of self-governing Provinces and Principalities, federated by one Central Government. But whatever the object of your rule in India, the universal demand of those Indians whom I have met and corresponded with is that you should state it. Having stated it you should give some instalment to show that you are in real earnest; some beginning of the new plan which you intend to pursue that gives you the opportunity of giving greater representative institutions in some form or other to the people of India, of giving them greater control of their Executive—that affords you the opportunity of giving the Executive more liberty from home because you cannot leave your harassed officials responsible to two sets of people. Responsibility here at home was intended to replace or to be a substitute for responsibility in India. As you increase responsibility in India, you can lessen that responsibility at home.”

After the debate, Austen Chamberlain, the Secretary of State for India, resigned because he felt in honour bound to accept responsibility for the mistakes made by the Government of India. This unexpected event vitally affected Montagu’s career. After saying that Lloyd George had agreed to postpone the announcement of his appointment as Minister for Reconstruction till after the Mesopotamian debate, Montagu’s record continues as follows:

“I made my speech on Thursday, 12th July, and Chamberlain immediately afterwards resigned. None of my friends who could have given me information knew of his impending resignation. It certainly never entered my head, and, when I knew it, it never crossed my mind that I should be offered India.”

On 14 July Montagu drafted, but did not send, a letter withdrawing his acceptance of the post of Minister of Reconstruction and asking to continue the work without the creation of a Ministry, because the proposed appointment had been criticised both by those hostile to Montagu and by those opposed to adding to the number of Ministers. Hankey asked him to hold back this letter for two days.

“On Monday [16 July] Hankey sent for me from the House of

Commons and told me that Lloyd George had told him on Sunday [July 15th] that he proposed to offer me the India Office. I told him that I could not believe it. Later on Monday Guest [Chief Whip] told me that George would give me the choice between India and Reconstruction, Addison going to the one which I refused. I told Guest that I should ask the Prime Minister not to offer me India because I should prefer Reconstruction, and that as it was [i.e. without creating a Ministry], but that I could not refuse India if it was offered to me.

“On Tuesday morning I was breakfasting here with Lord Buckmaster of all people when a message came that the Prime Minister must see me before ten. I went round to Downing Street, where the Prime Minister was just going to see the King. He told me that he wanted me to go to the India Office, and he had made up his mind to send me there. I asked about Reconstruction and he told me that he was sorry to say there was no choice left, he wanted Reconstruction for Addison, the only Office to which he was willing to go. I asked permission to continue to take an interest in Reconstruction and said I would accept the India Office. (It is interesting to note that Addison says since that the appointment to the Ministry of Reconstruction was agreed upon between Lloyd George and himself before he made his speech on the Munitions Debate.)

“George told me that Curzon and Balfour were protesting that my speech on the Mesopotamian Report made my position at the India Office difficult, that if I was appointed after that speech, that speech would be taken to be the policy of the Government. I said of course it would, it could mean nothing else. George agreed and said he had read the speech very carefully and he was surprised to find how many cautious phrases there were in it. He would like me to write him a letter to read in the Cabinet and would I remember that the letter was meant for Curzon and to soothe his alarms. I replied abruptly that although I was quite willing to restate what I had said, it was quite impossible for me to make any alterations in what I had said publicly, and it would only land him and me into difficulties if I were to attempt to do so.

“Although George had only given me an hour to write the letter and although I could not start on it till  $\frac{1}{4}$  to 11, it ought to have reached Downing Street by 12.30, a quick time to formulate an Indian policy! I had only two people available whom I could



consult, Sir James Stevenson and Nash. I asked them to look at the letter and Hansard together with a particular view to seeing that I had not watered down my public utterance. With their assent the letter went, and I heard nothing more from George except a verbal message from Guest that he had been disappointed with the letter but that the announcement was to be made the next morning and the King had assented.

“It was only after the appointment had been announced on Wednesday that I heard rumours that led me to think he never showed the letter to the Cabinet or to Curzon or to Balfour, but the history that I have chronicled accurately above shows that I am on firm ground in stating that that speech or the letter a copy of which I attach is my charter, and that no one will have any reason to complain if at a subsequent date my resignation is caused by a refusal to adopt any part of that letter as the policy by the Government.”

Lloyd George appointed Montagu to the India Office and, about the same time, Sir Winston Churchill to the Ministry of Munitions without consulting the War Cabinet or his colleagues. Lord Derby for example was “furious at being kept in ignorance”. He commented: “The appointment of Montagu, a Jew, to the India Office has made, as far as I can judge, an uneasy feeling both in India and here, but I personally have a very high opinion of his capability and I expect he will do well”. Lord Derby regarded the appointments as a clever move which took away from Asquith his two most powerful lieutenants and provided himself with two first-class platform speakers (Randolph Churchill, *Lord Derby*, pp. 281-82).

The following is the all-important letter which was written at such record speed:

“17th July, 1917

“My dear Prime Minister,

“The speech which I made in the House of Commons on the 12th July was delivered, as you know, without the faintest suspicion that there would be in a few minutes a vacancy in the India Office.

“You have now offered me the Secretaryship of State, and

as I told you this morning, I am proud to accept that offer.

“Of course it will be taken as a general acceptance by the Government of the policy outlined in my speech. Anyone who reads the speech will see to what extent the Government is committed if I become a member of it.

“The main principles are:

“(1) An immediate *exploration* of the system of governing India at home and in India with a view to devising greater elasticity and greater efficiency, and

“(2) A statement that the *ultimate* end we have in view for the Indian Empire is a series of self-governing Provinces united to one another and to the principalities by one Central Government, together with some instalment of the policy as a start . . . .

“I definitely expressed my belief that Home Rule for India is not possible. I asked that the goal for which we were aiming should be stated to be a federation of great self-governing provinces and principalities, in order that both the people of India and those who control its destinies might have the trend of policy explained to them. The policy should be safe-guarded as to time. Before that goal is achieved many years, and indeed many generations, will have been spent, and different parts of India can be treated at a different speed. I asked for a statement of the goal and some instalment as an earnest. I have not the slightest intention of urging my colleagues, if I become a member of your Government, to embark upon precipitate action. I should not dream of suggesting touching the great fabric of the Government of India without careful investigation.

“Yours sincerely,

“(Sd) E. S. MONTAGU

“The Right Hon. D. Lloyd George, M.P.”



## CHAPTER X

### *Secretary of State for India (July 1917)*

Aet. 38

WHEN MONTAGU assumed office, he found that one of his first tasks was to obtain a Cabinet decision on the terms of a Declaration of policy. This question already had a long history. Sir S. P. Sinha,<sup>1</sup> who had been a member of the Viceroy's Council, was President of the Indian Congress in 1915 and in his Presidential Address expressed an earnest desire for a "goal" to be announced. Lord Hardinge had supported this desire in March 1916. Lord Chelmsford and his Council in November 1916 had proposed a long formula which began: "The goal to which we look forward is the endowment of British India as an integral part of the Empire, with self-government, but the rate of progress towards that goal must depend upon the improvement and wide diffusion of education, the softening of racial and religious differences and the acquisition of political experience." As steps towards this goal they advocated (1) local government bodies to be more democratic; (2) more Indians in the higher branches of the public services, and (3) a larger elected element and wider constituencies for Provincial Councils. The Government of India saw the objections to defining a goal, but felt it to be necessary in order to support Moderate Reformers, such as Sinha, and detach them from extremist Home Rulers, such as Mrs. Besant. But the recommendations were not unanimous: Sir Reginald Craddock thought they went too far, and Sir Sankaran Nair thought they did not go far enough, and varying views had been expressed by the heads of Presidencies and Provinces.

The Secretary of State's Council, after pondering on these proposals from December 1916 to March 1917, criticized them on several grounds. One important criticism was that the Provincial

<sup>1</sup> Satiandra P. Sinha, afterwards Lord Sinha (1864-1928). Under Secretary of State, India Office, 1919-20; Governor of Bihar and Orissa in 1921-22.

Councils were to be given no direct financial or administrative responsibilities and would be likely to be critics with little responsibility and too much opportunity to throw spanners into the works. The Council recognised that due assurances should be given, but felt it even more important not to be committed to false steps, which would be irrevocable. So they suggested an enquiry by a Select Committee or a Royal Commission.

Unfortunately the Government of India felt bound to maintain complete silence about their proposals to the War Cabinet, and month after month passed before the War Cabinet found time to deal with the question of constitutional reforms in India, despite constant reminders on the part of the Viceroy that the situation was deteriorating and would continue to do so in the absence of an announcement. The long-continued silence of the Government of India exasperated Indian politicians. The Congress and Muslim League jointly put forward a scheme of reforms as definite steps towards self-government and the Moderates, failing to obtain any concessions, tended to coalesce with more extreme Home Rulers.

In May 1917 Lord Chelmsford pressed urgently for an announcement, but his telegram crossed a letter from the Secretary of State explaining why an enquiry by a Committee was felt to be necessary.

The Secretary of State (Mr. Chamberlain) made this recommendation to the War Cabinet on 22 May, but it was not considered till 29 June. He expressed the view that the situation in India was fraught with the gravest possibilities unless the Government made a timely and satisfactory pronouncement. Lord Curzon supported Mr. Chamberlain generally, but urged him to visit India himself, instead of appointing a Committee. Mr. Balfour agreed that something had to be done, but regarded it as a complete mistake to suppose that India could ever become a self-governing democratic political unity like Australia or South Africa. The discussion was adjourned till the Prime Minister could be present and was resumed on 5 July. Owing to pressure of business it was again adjourned and a week later Chamberlain resigned as the result of the debate on the Mesopotamian campaign, and was succeeded by Montagu on 17 July.

On 2 August Montagu wrote to Chamberlain: "I hope shortly



to make a move in the question of general political reforms, but, as you will have realised, the path will not be an easy one."

Further correspondence followed:

"Whitehall, S. W. 1

"7th August, 1917

"Dear Chamberlain,

"The Viceroy and various people in India become more and more insistent about an immediate pronouncement. Time goes on and I cannot get the Cabinet to find the necessary leisure to discuss it. Even when I do, so far as I can judge, they are likely to shy at the word 'Self-government'. Curzon is the only one whom I have consulted. He agrees to the idea of a visit to India, but dislikes the word 'Self-government'. So far as I can see, inheriting the position where you left it, it is a choice really, not between using the word 'Self-government' and not using it, but between an announcement and no announcement. If we do not use the word 'Self-government', I do not believe any announcement will fulfil its purpose, and the fact that we have avoided using it will be pounced upon by the Home Rulers. It is a word which has been constantly used by various people in India, particularly by Lord Hardinge. I think it has been used by older Viceroys and Secretaries of State. I therefore am inclined to think that if we do not use it, we had better make no announcement, and judging from what is written and telegraphed from India, if we make no announcement, we must make up our minds for grim repression on a growing scale and the alienation of many, if not all, the Moderates.

"The Right Hon. J. Austen Chamberlain, M. P."

"India Office

"Whitehall, S. W. 1

"15th August, 1917

"My dear Chamberlain,

"At last yesterday the long delayed discussion came off, and as I had 'lobbied' every member of the Cabinet first, it was approved. The Prime Minister is really the most extraordinary of mortals. I saw him at breakfast, explained the whole position to him, and got a promise that he would back me up. Before I had been speaking three minutes, he chipped in with an objection to quarrelling about

words and a statement that 'Self-government' was really what Lord Curzon in his second Memorandum described it as being. Fortunately Lord Curzon was more helpful than the Prime Minister and did not take this view; but I could not get the word 'Self-government' out of him. For some reason which I am absolutely unable to understand people prefer 'responsible Government' to 'Self-government'. I do not know the difference. If there is a difference, 'Self-government' might mean that India was to be placed under a Hindu or Parsee dictator, but 'responsible Government', I should have thought, meant that that Hindu or Parsee dictator would have been responsible to some form of Parliamentary institution. So I think they have given more than your formula would have necessitated. But I felt that I could not press the matter in view of the great liberality of the formula to which Curzon consented, and I contented myself with making the one stipulation that it must satisfy the Viceroy. . . . "

Montagu also described the Cabinet meeting in a letter to Chelmsford of 21 August 1917.

"It was a strange discussion. I had hoped that the word 'self-government' would be used, because it appeared in every one of your communications and because I thought it was a pity to boggle at a word so current in Indian discussion. The Cabinet in its wisdom preferred the words 'responsible Government' to 'self-Government'. It requires a better educated man than myself to know the difference, but if it lies anywhere, 'responsible Government' I should have thought, pledges more than 'self-Government'.

"Let me say that Chamberlain has been most useful to me in the whole of this matter. I sent him my Cabinet Memorandum. He wrote a letter which he allowed me to circulate to the Cabinet, and both he and Curzon were most sympathetic about the difficulties of the position.

". . . My whole policy in India will be governed by the support that I can give to the Viceroy, and you may rely upon me to do nothing to embarrass your position. I feel sure that neither you nor I care about trappings and ceremonials, but the position of the Viceroy must be maintained. The Secretary for India has no *locus standi* in the Empire of India, and it must be made quite



clear that all opinions expressed on behalf of the Government in India must be expressed by the Viceroy.

“...I think you would like to know that I extended an invitation to Chamberlain to come with me,<sup>2</sup> for I was anxious to give public expression to the continuity of policy which is in truth existent. Chamberlain has refused to come, saying that he does not feel bound to absent himself from England now that he has ceased to be Secretary of State, although he was prepared to make this sacrifice if he had remained in office.”

The announcement was made on 20 August 1917 as follows: “The policy of H. M. Government, with which the Government of India are in complete accord, is that of increasing association of Indians in every branch of the administration and the gradual development of self-governing institutions with a view to the progressive realisation of responsible government in India as an integral part of the British Empire.” It is one of the ironies of history that the announcement was drafted by Curzon.

“This announcement [to quote Morland and Chatterjee’s *Short History of India*] while it excited some surprise, aroused little opposition in England. It is probably correct to say that up to 1914 very few Englishmen had given serious thought to the future of India. Ordinary people know it as a distant dependency, plagued by a few irresponsible politicians and agitators but progressing under British rule, and they were content to leave the matter there. The events of the war brought the dependency nearer to their minds and their hearts and feelings were stirred by various picturesque incidents of the time which operated to make it appear natural and reasonable that the dependency should develop into a dominion.”

Montagu, having successfully extorted the Declaration of 20 August from an indifferent and reluctant War Cabinet, felt how great were the difficulties ahead. He wrote to Chelmsford on 21 August 1917:

<sup>2</sup> The Cabinet had agreed that the Secretary of State should visit India to discuss reforms.

“The real trouble about Indian Reforms seems to me to be, apart from all its political aspects, that reforms cost money, and we have very nearly reached the limit (have we not?) of the taxable capacity of the Indians. It is often said that India is a poor country, or rather a poor Empire. I dispute that proposition. The Indians, except for an infinitesimal number, are poor people and not taxable, but side by side with this the finances of the country have been so well managed under British rule that the unproductive debt of India is almost a minus quantity and its resources are enormous, so that you have a country of great richness inhabited by poor people. How are we to develop these resources? How are we to encourage the application of capital? How are we to enrich the population?”

And on 21 September 1917:

“... The more I think of the subject, the more I realise the extraordinary difficulties of the position. We must now, I think, approach it from this standpoint. We have promised in the name of the British Government the development of self-governing institutions and a progressive realisation of responsible government in India. How far can we go in this direction safely? For obviously if this is our object, the nearer we approach it, the greater our success. That is very simple, but that is all that is simple. If the situation were such that we could say to India: ‘Bless you. The time has now come when we withdraw our machinery of executive government and substitute for it an indigenous one, completely responsible to the Indian people, and we are determined not to interfere with its wishes’: we could, I think, draw up a beautiful constitution, embodying the best features of all the constitutions of the world. It would look beautiful on paper and we could then fold our arms and watch the Millenium. But fortunately or unfortunately, we are discussing a problem of the administration of an important part of the world, and are not considering an abstract matter for debate in a lunatic asylum consisting of constitutional lawyers whose minds have given way. Is there any country in the world that has attempted a half-way house in this, or a quarter-way house? An autocratic and independent executive is common. Self-governing institutions are now (I don’t ever quite know why), accepted as the only proper form of government. How can you unite the two? Can you have a form of government administered by an alien



agency partly responsible to the people of the country itself?

“You have got a democracy at home, ignorant of Indian conditions, a Central Government in India naturally jealous of the efficiency of the Government of which it is the custodian, local governments growing in importance with the civilisation of the countries over which they preside, and an Indian opinion produced by a long series of statesmen from Macaulay to Morley which is now absolutely impossible to ignore. How can we reconcile all these things at a time when no complete solution is possible and everything must be another step upon the slope which we started on a hundred years ago?”

Before sailing for India Montagu had lunch with King George and Queen Mary. He recounted what passed to Chelmsford in a letter of 4 October.

“I had the honour of lunching with the King and Queen last week. We were alone. The King is anxious to be associated by name with any great pronouncement about Indian Reforms, but he knows that Curzon is opposed to this. His Majesty seems to feel anxious that Indians may regard anything that we say or do as being independent of one Government or another, and I promised to discuss this matter with you. The Queen spoke to me about Delhi and I was relieved to find that she drew a sharp distinction between what was possible and impossible. All that she begged was that internal decoration and furnishing should not be hurried on on a cheap scale, but that we should wait till more money was available. I assured her that this was your policy and that it had been communicated to the Delhi Advisory Committee which Chamberlain appointed and over which Crewe presides. She also asked me about Mrs. Besant, and I assured her that there had been no intention of questioning the action of the Madras Government. It had been merely a matter of deciding when to release her and that an opportunity had presented itself to you and that you had assurances that she meant to behave herself.

“The King said a few vague things about the precedence of Chiefs, about the Yacht Club at Bombay and its refusal to admit natives, but the subject uppermost in his mind at the moment was the air raid of the previous night which had been quite close enough to Buckingham Palace to be interesting. Indeed the amazing

phenomenon of London invaded night after night by foreign forces is giving many people food for thought. But on the whole London is standing it well and after all the material damage done is at present not very great.”

During the last weeks before Montagu sailed for India he had taken part in the controversy about Palestine which had caused him profound unhappiness. The Zionists on 18 July 1917 handed to Balfour a formula of a Declaration by His Majesty's Government that they accepted the principle of recognising Palestine as the National Home of the Jewish People, the realisation of which necessitated internal autonomy to the Jewish Nationality in Palestine and freedom of immigration for Jews. With the help of Mark Sykes the leaders of Zionism had converted many British Ministers, including Lloyd George and Balfour. Montagu was inexorably anti-Zionist. Lloyd George, in recounting Montagu's opposition, recalls that Montagu “once mournfully said to the late Lord Morley, ‘I have been striving all my life to escape from the Ghetto’.”<sup>3</sup> This does not do justice to Montagu's views, which he explained in the following letter to Sir Eric Drummond, on 3 August 1916:

“It seems to me that Jews have got to consider whether they regard themselves as members of a religion or of a race, world-wide in its habitat and striving to maintain in spite of geographical distribution an entity for political as well as religious consideration.

“For myself I have long since made the choice. I view with horror the aspiration of national unity. Did I accept it, as a patriotic Englishman, I should resign my position on the Cabinet and declare myself neutral, or at any rate not primarily concerned in the present war. Nobody is entitled to occupy the position that I do unless he is free and determined to consider, and consider only, the interest of the British Empire.”

From August to October “Edwin Montagu seized every opportunity to plead, sometimes with tears, against the British Government's Zionist policy.” He considered the Jews as a religious community and not as a nation and himself as a Jewish Englishman. He argued that, whatever safeguarding words were introduced into

<sup>3</sup> Lloyd George's *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, 1939, p. 733.



the Declaration, the civil rights of Jews in the countries where they lived might be endangered. How, he asked, could he negotiate with the peoples of India on behalf of His Majesty's Government if the world had just been told that His Majesty's Government regarded his national home as being on Turkish territory? The vehemence with which he urged his views astonished the War Cabinet.

Before the meeting of the War Cabinet on 3 September 1917 Montagu circulated a Memorandum, provocatively entitled "The Anti-Semitism of the present Government." Montagu was invited to attend this meeting of the War Cabinet and insisted that the use of the phrase "home of the Jewish people" would vitally prejudice the position of every Jew elsewhere. Both Lloyd George and Balfour were absent: the War Cabinet decided to temporise and to consult President Wilson. The President was at first very lukewarm, but Brandeis pleaded with him and told Weizmann on 24 September that the President was sympathetic. Weizmann succeeded in seeing Lloyd George for two or three minutes on 28 September and Lloyd George gave instructions that the Declaration should be placed on the agenda of the War Cabinet on 30 October, 1917. Montagu circulated a second memorandum and developed his views with the same passionate conviction as before. Balfour was quite unmoved; he saw nothing inconsistent between the establishment of a Jewish national focus in Palestine and the complete assimilation and absorption of Jews into the nationality of other countries. He argued that France and America approved the policy and that it was essential to forestall the Germans who were wooing the Zionists.

After the War Cabinet meeting Montagu wrote to Lloyd George:

"You are being misled by a foreigner, a dreamer and idealist . . . who sweeps aside all practical difficulties . . . . If you make a statement about Palestine as the National Home for the Jews, every anti-Semitic organisation and newspaper will ask what right a Jewish Englishman, with the status at best of a naturalised foreigner, has to take a foremost part in the Government of the British Empire . . . . The country for which I have worked ever since I left the University—England, the country for which my family have fought, tells me that my national home, if I desire to go there, therefore my natural home is Palestine."

The War Cabinet decided to consult President Wilson again and to invite the views of Zionist leaders and of British anti-Zionists, including Claude Montefiore, Sir Leonard Cohen and Sir Philip Magnus, M.P. The War Cabinet also consulted Viscount Samuel who favoured a declaration once a military victory had been attained. President Wilson sent a favourable reply on 16 October 1917 and at last the War Cabinet reached a decision.

They altered the wording of the Declaration: "The establishment in Palestine of a National Home for the Jewish race" was substituted for "Palestine shall be reconstituted as the National Home of the Jewish people", and added verbal safeguards for the rights of the non-Jewish population of Palestine. The Zionists tried in vain to change "establishment" to "re-establishment," but succeeded in changing back "Jewish race" to "Jewish people."

The final text was settled by the Cabinet on 2 November 1917; Mark Sykes brought out the document to Weizmann, the Zionist leader, saying, "Dr. Weizmann, it's a boy."<sup>4</sup>

Lloyd George wrote in his *Memoirs of the Peace Conference*, "Urgent diplomatic and military reasons at last assured complete unanimity on the subject. Even Mr. Montagu surrendered his opposition and accepted the declaration as a military necessity." This is not true; when the news reached Montagu in India he wrote in his diary:

"Nov. 11th, 1917. I see from Reuter's telegram that Balfour has made the Zionist declaration against which I fought so hard. It seems strange to be a member of a Government which goes out of its way, as I think, for no conceivable purpose that I can see, to deal this blow at a colleague that is doing his best to be loyal to them, despite his opposition. The Government has dealt an irreparable blow at Jewish Britons, and they have endeavoured to set up a people which does not exist; they have alarmed unnecessarily the Mohammedan world . . . . Why we should intern Mahomed Ali in India for Pan-Mohammedanism when we encourage Pan-Judaism, I cannot for the life of me understand. It certainly puts the date to my political activities."

<sup>4</sup> Weizmann, *Trial and Error*, p. 262. See Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration*, Valentine Mitchell 1961, and Lloyd George, *The Truth about the Peace Treaties*, Gollancz, 1938. vol. II. p. 1133.



Lady Diana Cooper records<sup>5</sup> a farewell dinner: "I found myself seated between Alan [Parsons] and Edwin, the latter divine, speaking bravely enough of his thankfulness for two Heaven-given years with his wife, and of his reliance on me to look after her widowhood, and of several significant omens that signalled his approaching death."

Montagu left a letter to his wife to be opened after his death:

"My life", he wrote, "ever since I have known you has been happier than it was before. My happiness in you as my wife has been beyond belief and potent against all external worries and agonies. It seemed almost too good to last. Darling you were wonderful to me and I loved you more than I can ever show. In the name of everything we have enjoyed together, look for the fun I wanted to give you everywhere. Do what you like, go where you please, anything that brings you fun would be joy to me.

"When you and all we loved together are together, think of me sometimes, but all I ask of you is to enjoy your life for my sake."

<sup>5</sup> *The Rainbow Comes and Goes*, Rupert Hart Davis, 1958, p. 158.

## CHAPTER XI

### *Indian Diary (November 1917-April 1918)*

Aet. 39

THIS CHAPTER consists of extracts from *An Indian Diary* edited by Venetia Montagu with help from Alan Parsons and published by William Heinemann Ltd. in 1930. The Diary reflected the varying moods of each hour and was not revised; in fairness to Montagu this must be stressed.

The Delegation of eight which accompanied Montagu included the Earl of Donoughmore, Charles Roberts, M.P. and members of the India Office and Government of India. He gave a bird's eye sketch of the part played by each in the Diary on his way home.

Montagu reached Bombay on 10 November 1917.

“The entrance to Bombay is a never-forgettable sight, but Bombay itself and one's first introduction to India is, I think, one of the wonders of the world, and must produce exuberance, enthusiasm, even to the most prosaic nature. The blue sea, the hills in the foreground, in the background, on the horizon, in the middle distance, of various degrees of blues and blacks and greys; the white buildings, the marvellous spacing, the silent quiet crowds of foot passengers, the bright coloured garments of the women, their stately carriage and beautiful walk at all ages, which are enough in my mind to repair any deficiency in beauty; the white robes of the men; the turbans of the soldiers—and all this is something which charmed me when I first saw Bombay, and is even more potent on my return.”

Montagu's policy was to avoid any appearance of forcing his own Reform plans on the Government of India and to get his plans put forward by others. He was almost overwhelmed by the importance of his mission and by his responsibility for its success or failure.



“To the British Empire and to India the crisis produced by the policy and my visit requires the ability, the tact, the courage of the greatest of English statesmen. I wish Lloyd George were here; I wish the whole British Cabinet had come; I wish Asquith were here. It is one of India’s misfortunes that I am alone, alone the person that has got to carry this thing through . . . I would that I could make it clear to those at home that if the results of our deliberations are either something which India will not accept, or a niggling, miserly, grudging safeguard, fiddling with the existing order of things, we shall have defrauded and defrauded irreparably—for they will never believe us again—a vast Continent, whose history is our glory, and whose hopes and aspirations, fears and tribulations it is pathetic to see.”

After two days at Delhi, Montagu gives his impression of the Viceroy, Lord Chelmsford, (Viceroy 1916-22).

“He has not the dignity of Hardinge or the pomposity of Curzon, but he is quite good to look at, with fine athletic figure. Conversation soon showed that he is really a good fellow, thoroughly nice, but unfortunately cold, aloof and reserved. Oh, the fact of the matter is—and it is borne in on me every moment of the day, every hour, but it is of no use because nobody will believe me—the sort of man we seek to make a Viceroy is wholly wrong . . . . They approach their problem from the wrong side: they do the work they are called upon to do; they wade through files; they think of their regulations; and then as to the social side precedence, precedence, precedence . . . . Informal discussion, informal conversation, they do not know. Political instinct they have none.”

Montagu was not content with the formal ten minutes interview granted to the Indian Chiefs. He had long informal talks with them “and they talk to me as they never dare talk to anybody else. Perhaps there is some truth in the allegation that I am an Oriental. Certainly that social relationship which English people seem to find so difficult comes quite easy to me; and we shall go from bad to worse, until we are hounded out of India, unless something is done to correct this sort of thing.”

Montagu was horrified at the Reform Scheme produced by the Government of India. “I am sorry”, he wrote in the Diary, “that





Group including Lord and Lady Chelmsford. *Back:* T. Sloan, G. E. Franey, E. B. Baring, W. Holland Hibbert, Lord Carnegie, and A. D. C.s to the Governor of Bengal. *Middle:* W. R. Gourlay, J. A. Denny, H. Austen Smith, J. L. Maffey, R. Verney, A. D. C.s to the Governor of Bengal, and Military Secretary to the Governor of Bengal. *Front:* Sir William Duke, Earl of Donoughmore, Edwin Montagu, Lady Ronaldshay, Lord Chelmsford, Lady Chelmsford, Lord Ronaldshay and Charles Roberts, M.P.—[*Reproduced by courtesy of the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Great Britain*].





my personality is such, that my record is such, that the difficulties of the Government are increased so much by my visit to India, for it has whetted their appetite. But any Secretary of State coming to India would have made it impossible to present such a document to the people of this country. They would shout derision."

On returning to Delhi on 26 November 1917, after a short holiday in Bikaner, Montagu was faced "with the real giants in the Indian political world"—including Jinnah,<sup>1</sup> Gandhi, Mrs. Besant. Montagu commented in his Diary: "The difficulty is that owing to the thinness with which we have spread education, they have run generations away from the rest of India, and, whatever might be done in theory, in practise this would only be another and indigenous autocracy." "Mrs. Besant, in her white and gold embroidered Indian clothes, with her short white hair, and the most beautiful voice I have ever heard, was very impressive and read magnificently."

Of Gandhi, "He is a social reformer; he has a real desire to find grievances and to cure them, not for any reasons of self-advertisement, but to improve the conditions of his fellow-men. All he wants is that we should get India on our side. He wants the millions of India to leap to the assistance of the British Throne."

Mrs. Besant and others implored Montagu to come to the Congress in Calcutta. "Oh, if only Lloyd George were in charge of this thing. He would of course dash down to the Congress and make them a great oration. I am prevented from doing this. It might save the whole situation." It was surely the tragedy of this Indian visit that so many weary hours were spent listening to the views of people and parties of secondary importance, while the real problem was to find a compromise which Congress would accept and the Government of India would hesitate to reject. This was probably always an insoluble problem: but it was the real one.

Calcutta was reached on 1 December 1917. The weary round of receiving deputations and interviews began afresh. There was "one of the most appalling dinner parties I have ever been at in my life" and there was "a garden party of 2000 people, where I spent my whole time shaking hands feverishly." On the other hand

<sup>1</sup> Mohamed Ali Jinnah (1876-1948), President of Moslem League, signed the Lucknow Pact with Hindus in 1916; Governor General of Pakistan, 1947-48.



a lunch with Sinha was “a friendly, merry party”, with “the modern Bengali at his best.”

On leaving Calcutta on 12 December 1917, Montagu wrote: “So ends Calcutta. I like Chelmsford more than ever. Fatigue cannot stale the courtesy of his manner or the inherent honesty of his character. Whether he will ever be got to express any opinion of his own, or to get over the difficulty of deferring to everything that is said by his officials, I do not know. Ronaldshay [Governor of Bengal] is alive and has some driving force.” Montagu’s proposals, at that moment, included the appointment of Sinha to succeed him as Secretary of State and his own, Montagu’s appointment as Under Secretary until the Reform Bill was through Parliament. “This idea, which came to me in my bath this morning, seems to me the most brilliant that has ever entered my head . . . It will fire the imagination of the Indian, and it is just the sort of thing that Lloyd George’s dramatic sense will accept.”

*Madras, December 14th-23rd 1917*

“Nothing”, Montagu wrote in his Diary, “can exceed the beauty of Madras—the blue sea, the white buildings, the white-dressed people, the rich green vegetation, Government House itself set in a park, in parts English-like, with great spreading trees and lawns, in parts tropical, with groves of palm trees and herds of black buck feeding on the grass, and the sea beyond—the most lovely thing you can possibly imagine.”

Once again Montagu had to face the weary, dreary round “of deputations, interviews and dinner parties. (I do not know what I am to do about these dinner parties. I cannot keep awake after dinner)”. He found an unhappy situation. “During the past five years the change which has come over Madras is simply appalling. Then it was a peaceful country, inhabited by men and women on amiable terms with one another, differing from the whole of the rest of India in being happy. Now the English hate the Indians; the Indians hate the English, and this new violent opposition of the Brahmins to the non-Brahmins has become the guiding principle of the place.”

Montagu found that his Reform Scheme was criticized by Indians “as one which asks the Indians to be treated as schoolboys,

getting a little more each time their schoolmasters say they may have it. Of course that is not my meaning. I do not doubt their ability to work representative institutions. Other countries have done it, and I think Indians can; but until they have learnt the customs, conventions, traditions and uses which are inseparable from representative institutions, and which cannot be embodied in any Act of Parliament, the transfer of powers of law and order to them will lead to anarchy, revolution, bloodshed and starvation which has resulted in Russia. It is this use of power which they must be taught, which they must learn by experience and which we cannot risk. I cannot see there is anything offensive in telling them this.” This is a clear explanation of the fundamental thought underlying Montagu’s Reform Scheme. He assumed that Parliamentary Democracy on the Anglo-Saxon model is the only alternative to bureaucratic tyranny or else to anarchy and chaos. He also assumed that responsibility for some subjects in the Provinces would be a real training for responsible self-government as a Dominion—at some future and perhaps distant date. He recognised that, even though immediate self-government would lead to chaos, “the result years afterwards might be a more vigorous, more healthy, more self-created plant than we have in view.” But in the meanwhile India would have been invaded and conquered by Germany or Japan.

Montagu left Madras “with a heavy heart. Here, if anywhere officials administrate and do not govern; here, if anywhere, they do not explain themselves and hold themselves aloof. Here, if anywhere, they misuse powers, either their Press Act or their powers to disallow Resolutions and Bills.”

“Pentland [Governor of Madras], thin, whiskered, in tightly buttoned frock-coat, large gardenia-like flower in his buttonhole, saw us off on the platform, looking what he is—an Early Victorian Governor of post-war India.”

*Bombay, December 24th 1917-January 3rd 1918*

The formal hearing of evidence from all and sundry was concluded by a visit to Bombay. It was a happy ten days. Lord and Lady Willingdon were old friends and perfect hosts (Willingdon was Governor of Bombay). Jinnah seemed satisfied with the Reform



scheme outlined by Montagu. Later, three Indians assured him that his scheme would commend itself to 90 per cent of the people of India.

At the end of his visit Montagu wrote in his Diary: "Bombay has been a great success, and it is far the happiest and most progressive part of India. I feel happier. I am pleased with Chelmsford."

The long series of formal interviews at Delhi, Madras and Bombay ended by one with "Khaparde, Tilak's right hand man, pleasant to talk to, but not much use . . . As Khaparde left the room, Chelmsford and I shook hands and almost danced for joy. This was the last of the formal interviews; the evidence is at an end. It has been most useful."

Montagu enjoyed a few days' holiday, shooting tigers at Gwalior. But on his return to Delhi, he was overcome by gloom. "I do not know what to do; I do not know where to turn for help. The whole thing just as it looked most promising, has tumbled about my ears. Oh, my God, I do not know whether I should not go home at once, frankly confess I have failed, and turn my attention to smashing the whole concern." What happened was this: Montagu had proposed responsible government for the Provinces after six years, except in so far as a Statutory Committee decided to reserve certain subjects—the onus of proof being on those who wished to reserve. Chelmsford had explained this to his Council as simply a means of doing nothing for six years and putting off the evil day.

The next day the atmosphere changed again to cheerfulness. It looked as if agreement could be reached on a scheme for responsible Government in the Provinces after twelve, instead of six, years. "The crisis is over for the moment, but it was very near a split."

At this stage Montagu wrote a letter to his wife on 24 January 1918. "We are getting on famously and now all Government of India, Chelmsford and all heads of Provinces except Pentland have agreed to my schemes (modified it is true, but not so much that I can't accept them). My only fear, and it is a real one is that the Indians won't accept them, as being too moderate, but they will be fools if they don't, for in about twelve years they will get more than they want."

Montagu welcomed a week-end's duck shooting holiday. "I do not think I have ever enjoyed a morning's shooting so much; and I am never so happy as when shooting" (It seems incredible that the kindest of men could so have enjoyed mass murder. Without such holidays, "I am sure I should die, for I am getting very, very stale . . . . It is the constant strain of wheedling, negotiating, threatening. No sooner do you conciliate one set of people than a new one turns up."

There came "a violent note from O'Dwyer [Lieutenant Governor of Punjab] damning our scheme all the way up hill and down dale; a note from Robertson, saying he does not like it; and a note from Pentland saying he has no time to express any opinions at all". This caused gloom, which in turn was dispelled. "Alan [Parsons] brought me very gratifying news—that Chelmsford had written to Islington in high praise of me. That's all right! Chelmsford reports that the Council this morning swallowed my proposals about the Government of India—bless them!"

But there followed a series of difficult meetings with the Lieutenant Governors. 22 January 1918 was "really the worst of all mornings, the one obstacle to success."

"I started the ball", Montagu records, "I had to lay before the Conference the various variants of the schemes that seemed acceptable to us. I spoke for an hour, and put everything I knew into it. I endeavoured to be as clear as possible, as conciliatory as possible, and endeavoured to carry the day. Clarity, I achieved; I know the subject, by now, I hope, thoroughly. My logic I thought unanswerable." But there were many objections and "so ended the Lieutenant Governors, all at sixes and sevens. We adjourned at a quarter past six, thoroughly tired, having sat since half past ten continuously. It was pouring with rain by that time and icy cold. Everybody was depressed and excited."

Then the barometer changed again. "Thursday January 24th. A great day! In the morning I had a divine letter from Willingdon saying that I had cheered him up by coming to see him, that everything was coming right."

But cheerfulness did not last. The Conference of Governors and Lieutenant Governors discussed agitation. After two hours,

"I told them I was more depressed than I could say by what they



had said; I did not seem to talk the same language as they did; that I daresay they were right, but, if they were right, then our policy was wrong; we need not discuss political reform any further. . . . Their scheme dated from a day before Parliamentary institutions dawned in India. I heard them say, to my amazement, that it was a most disquieting sign that agitation was spreading to the villages. What was the unfortunate politician in India to do? He was told that he could not have self-government because there was no electorate, because only the educated wanted it, because the villagers had no political instincts; and then when he went into the villages to try to make an electorate, to try and create a political desire, he was told he was agitating and that agitation must be put a stop to . . . . We should try and educate the villagers; we should put our case; but to sit quiet while an agitator was agitating and then intern him showed that we had no answer . . . Disaffection was an excellent thing if it meant you were teaching a man that he must hope for better things. Our whole policy was to make India a political country, and it was absolutely impossible to associate that with repression.

“Willingdon quite agreed with me; the others looked very gloomy.”

After the close of the Conference, Montagu had mixed feelings: “On the whole [I am] very pleased when I think what we got . . . It all seems to me to be splendid, but ‘there’s many a slip twixt the cup and the lip’.” After a large and very successful dinner, “I came home and spent three quarters of an hour walking up and down the garden because I am not happy. The Lieutenant Governors and heads of Provinces have been rather poor creatures. They have put their names to a compromise which none of them believes in, and they are going away very sore at heart.”

As regards Indian opinion, an interview with Sastri,<sup>2</sup> a leader of the moderates in India, was not encouraging. “It increased my certainty that, although I have had a great success with the Government of India, the local governments, and a personal success with deputations, I think our remedies will fall far short of the circumstances of the country.”

<sup>2</sup> Srinivasa Sastri (1869-1946). Privy Councillor, C. H. Delegate to Imperial Conference, 1921; Visited South Africa on India’s behalf in 1927.

Sastri and the other "Moderates" whom Montagu consulted, "were all profoundly impressed with Montagu's personality, his honesty, earnestness and sincerity of purpose . . . If they were only half-converts to his scheme, they had become full converts to Montagu himself",<sup>3</sup> but Montagu's personal charm and powers of persuasion could not lastingly get over the difficulty that there was an unbridgeable gap between the minimum that Indian political opinion would accept and the maximum that the Conservative Government would agree to offer.

On 7 February 1918, on the eve of a holiday, Montagu wrote in the Diary:

"This is practically the end. Our proposals in principle are complete. We are engaged on the writing of the Report, which will be complete by the end of this month. But I leave in the depths of gloom—Curtis, Nair and Vincent all hostile—Curtis with his power of working Milner and Curzon. Well, things may look brighter, but they have never looked worse. I have come to an agreement with the Government of India which nobody accepts and that is what I have always feared might be the outcome. You see there has been nobody who has constructed; they have only acquiesced; and where I fear that my own proposals may have been spoiled is in my desperate endeavour to find compromises at every stage."

Montagu enjoyed the ten days' holiday, shooting in the forest of Kheri, but took the sport so seriously as sometimes to mar the enjoyment:

"I came to lunch thoroughly miserable. I had the best of the shooting; had three shots at one quite good stag and two shots at another, galloping, and missed them both. This incompetence distressed me. The place is so lovely; the opportunities for thought on the elephant are so marvellous; the glory of seeing the beasts move makes me quite happy, even if I do not get a shot all day. But what does annoy me is when I prove bad at the job."

Montagu returned to Delhi having done a great deal of work during his holiday. He was disappointed at Chelmsford's inactivity.

<sup>3</sup> Quoted from Dr. Mehrotra's unpublished thesis.



“Chelmsford asks me to postpone my departure for another month. I really find myself despairing of this man. He is faced with the greatest issue of his life—if only it were not merely India, about which nobody knows, I would say the greatest issue of anybody’s life. I have sent him new suggestion after new suggestion, and I find that the ten days has produced no corresponding thought of any kind from him . . . . I have got to go on alone. It is appalling to have to create one’s own schemes, and, not only that, but to create one’s own criticism of one’s own schemes.”

On 22 February 1918 at an all day Conference with the Government of India, “I explained the new scheme. . . . I have never spoken better, and I was intensely gratified to find that everybody unanimously agreed that this new scheme was much the best that had been produced; in fact it all went through very smoothly.”

Next came two days’ holiday at Bharatpur, shooting ducks. One “perfectly delightful day, we went through the reedy end of the jheel up to our waists all day in water. It was awfully hard work, but we got the wonderful bag of 50 couple of snipe, five teal, a bittern and a coot. It was one of the hardest and most enjoyable days I have ever spent.”

By 28 February 1918 gloom again prevailed:

“I cannot describe the weariness of my flesh. I am tired of conciliating, cajoling, persuading, lobbying, interviewing, accommodating, often spoiling my own plans to quell opposition. . . . I have been counting the days to get home and it has been borne in on me that I am going to spend a longer time here than ever—here where there is no war and where people do not feel it; where I am fighting every day against the inclination to let things go; where every telegram that comes from home makes me more anxious. I am a little bit sore that the Government on whose behalf I came, as a member of which I have been working night and day, has never sent me, in answer to my telegrams, one little line of encouragement. If I have failed, what have I done? I have kept India quiet for six months at a critical period of the war.”

The week-end of 9 to 10 March 1918 was spent duck shooting

at Jaipur. "The ruler<sup>4</sup> was the oldest of Indian Princes and in many ways the most conservative." Montagu liked him, though:

"he cannot speak a word of English, which is rather a bore. When I am haunted day and night as to whether my expedition has failed or not, whether my plan will be rejected by the Indians and howled out by the English and laughed to scorn by constitutional historians, I do take satisfaction to myself at finding how excellently I have got on with the Indians, be they Indian politicians or the Indian Princes. The same method is wanted for both—a sympathetic desire to find out what it is they want, and a perfectly frank expression of your own opinion. The terribly strained relations between the Government and the people now seems to me to be due more to the Government always talking to the people with reservations, which show they are founded on distrust, than anything else; and if you do not trust a man, he will not behave as if he ought to be trusted.

"We ended our two days' shoot with three tigers and a panther, two bears, two hyenas, a chinkara, a pig, a sambhur, 22 sand grouse and eight duck—the most successful shoot in the time that had ever been held at Siwai Madhopur."

Then there was a row with Marris (Joint Home Secretary and drafter of the Report) "who seemed to be in a funk about everything, and had been so impressed by Vincent's arguments as to actually say that he did not feel justified in writing the Report unless he was allowed to write what he thought fit. I never heard such nonsense. I told him he was a hack and had to express only our views."

"And then a tragedy happened." Montagu fell ill on 19 March. "I have never come across a doctor", he wrote, "without feeling profound contempt for the profession that I once examined. On cross-examination a doctor is always at his worst. He has no science; a few empirical rules for diagnosis: brilliant skill in directing appropriate nursing; and an optimistic desire to await events." "Poor man, he [the doctor] is much worried. My latest form of torture is to say to him: 'Well, doctor, what do you expect to find? what has happened since you were here last?'"

<sup>4</sup> His Highness the Maharajah of Jaipur, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., G.C.V.O.



As he is always wrong, it makes it all the worse for him.”

Montagu continued to work on the Report, despite illness. At one point there was “a fearful row between Basu and Nair and the rest of us on the proportion of Indians that were to be admitted to the I. C. S. Chelmsford lost his temper, I lost my temper and tried to be sarcastic.”

Peace was soon restored. Basu came along to Montagu’s tent with a peace offering. “I forgot to give you these”, said the poor old man. “These are three silk bands that have been made by his wife and girls for keeping up one’s pyjamas. This was too much for me and the crisis was over.”

By 24 March 1918 Montagu was convalescent, but weak and in need of quiet.

“Sleep is impossible in my tent. People run in every minute—first a chuprassi to know if I want anything; then a khitmagar to know when I want dinner; then another khitmagar to know for how many; then a chuprassi with a Reuter telegram; then a chuprassi with a telegram addressed to Lord Donoughmore; then a chuprassi to know if Mr. Parsons is there; then I ask for a glass of soda water and Kisch comes in to say that I sent for him. Then Roberts comes in with a suggestion that I should that evening see Gandhi to try and persuade him from going on a hunger strike until Mahomed Ali is released. So I went to bed, after making an announcement that anybody who came into my tent would be hanged.”

On 26 March 1918 everyone moved to the Viceroy’s summer quarters at Dehra Dun and Montagu waited impatiently for Marris to draft the Report. “The melancholy Marris is worshipping his melancholy gods in his melancholy tent, and more or less willingly, but never cheerfully, drafting what he is told to draft . . . . Friday [29 March] was a wasted day. I am still ill. I cannot shake off my fever and this place and the work are getting on my nerves and are becoming very depressing. I fear that the good relations between Chelmsford and myself are continued with effort.”

From 1 to 15 April 1918, “We have spent almost every day without exercise, continuously from ten in the morning till eight at night revising the report—Chelmsford, Duke, Marris

and I. Chelmsford has sat through the whole proceedings confining himself to such speculations as to whether the Government of India is a plural or singular noun. Marris has fought consistently for the right to say disagreeable things about people: I have fought to avoid it."

The time table was complicated by a telegram from the Prime Minister asking for more assistance from India in the prosecution of the war. Montagu was consulted. "I prepared a plan. At last it dawned upon the Viceroy, after I had dropped strong hints, that if I was to go into the matter at all, and if the Conference was to be held at my suggestion, I wanted to be present—that I ought to be present, and he then asked me to come to Simla with him."

Montagu arrived at Simla full of discontents. "Four hours round the hairpin curves is very tiring . . . I myself am not fond of hills, they obscure the view, and the sight of snow-capped mountains does not please me . . . We went up to Government House in rickshaws, a form of conveyance which I, personally, find most distasteful." And, to crown everything, "is it to be believed that, after bringing me up here, the Conference is to take the form of a meeting of the Executive Council, at which I am not to be present . . . This is the sort of step they take to preserve their little dignity." The decisions reached were "absurd and inadequate", but to Montagu's "astonishment and amazement", the Viceroy said, as Montagu came into the meeting to which he had been invited: "These are what we have decided—with an emphasis on 'decided'—and what I have asked you to come here for is in order that you should ask questions" . . . . "I should never have come to Simla in these humiliating circumstances." There was a row between Montagu and Chelmsford and "we parted the best of friends."

At last, on 21 April 1918 the Report was finished.

"The main principle is that instead of founding the Indian Government on the confidence of the people of England, we are gradually to found it on the confidence of the people of India. We are beginning in the Provinces, maintaining the Government of India as now, but subjected, I am glad to think, to more criticism, and future progress will depend on the creation of an electorate.

"Just a few words of retrospect. It is good to be going home,



but six months of India must make one regret their coming to an end. I love this country, it is where I am happiest. The circumstances are cheerful, we have got an agreed report. We have kept India quiet for six critical months. When I came out, Moderates were rushing to join the Home Rule League: on leaving, the secession of Moderates from the Home Rule League is making marked headway. . . . As regards Chelmsford, I have had to record many criticisms of him, but I, as I know only too well, am not easy to work with. We have been associated day in and day out, in circumstances of the most fearful fatigue, and of almost unequalled responsibility, for nearly six months, and I believe no two men could have quarrelled less. I believe that to be entirely due to his patience, to his self-control, and to his receptiveness. He is also a gentleman, if ever there was one. However, we should certainly have clashed if he had been constructive, and perhaps quarrelled, although I am painfully conscious of the shortcomings of my proposals, and wish to goodness I could have had some constructive assistance.

“ . . . In the future this report, the principles of the report, are dead unless they are acted upon, unless they animate the governments. Will they do anything when I have gone? Do they want someone to drive them before they will move? These are the anxieties. Shall I be allowed to carry out the proposals? That is another anxiety. On the other hand I have gone through the winter feeling that I exercised a very great influence with educated Indian opinion. Certainly, I got out of them what nobody now in India could have got out of them, but the question I go away with is, have I done anything to establish the confidence of the officials, or led them to agree that I have influence with the Indians? The events of the past week [namely, the failure to invite him to attend the Durbar] lead me very much to doubt it.”

On the way home Montagu wrote in the Diary:

“It may save time if I spend a few minutes in just summing up now some of the principle actors in this drama. I begin with Donoughmore—a wholly likeable fellow, very broad-minded and extraordinarily good-tempered; easily prejudiced and then obstinate but with undampable spirits and very easy-going . . . .

“Duke [Sir William Duke] universally popular, as sound as he





Cabinet mission (1917) with the Viceroy and others. *Standing:* G. E. Franey, A. L. R. Parsons, Charles Roberts, M. Seton, the Hon. Sir Archdale Earle and F. C. I. Halliday. *Sitting:* Lord Chelmsford, Earl of Donoughmore, Edwin Montagu, Sir William Duke, B. N. Basu and C. H. Kisch—[*Reproduced by courtesy of the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Great Britain*].





is slow in his judgment; generous instinct; conspicuous loyalty; great caution; no obvious originality, although I think he invented 'dyarchy'. He is a strange man. To look at him, with his big, light-blue eyes, firm lips, fierce frown, sulky expression, you would think he is universally bad-tempered and forbidding. He has a habit of staring hard, with a look of wonder and disapproval, but I think it is all manner; I hope so, at any rate.

"Roberts [Charles Roberts, M. P.], extraordinarily useful on details; the most conscientious of men, with a streak of suspicious honesty; great industry, never willingly let a point go; as good as gold; full of principles and maxims; courageous but sometimes hysterical. He has completely brought the Government of India to his side, and, although very detailed and niggardly in his mind, he has been a tower of strength to us.

"Seton [afterwards Sir Malcolm Seton] has really good brains, but a certain raggedness of mind which I think may stand in his way; but he is a very likeable fellow.

"Halliday [Indian Police] has been kindness itself, never losing an opportunity of being useful, considerate in the extreme; as likeable as it is possible to be; with the courage of a lion, undaunted by threatening death, and the blight of all his hopes by ill-health.

"Basu [Bhupendranath], wily, cunning, indirect, obstinate, a good fighter, a grateful fellow, a gentleman, with plenty of sporting instinct, a thoroughly good investment.

"Kisch [Sir C. H. Kisch] grows on me. With a thirst for information, often wrong-headed, often prejudiced, he is nevertheless a good fellow, with consummate knowledge of many subjects, but little ability for drafting and no tact. He has limitations which do not spoil the good points, which one learns to appreciate more and more, and he is certainly forgiving and tolerant." (It is fair to interpolate that the adverse verdict on drafting will surprise those of us who have known and admired Sir Cecil Kisch for nearly fifty years).

"Of course neither Kisch nor Alan Parsons have the one ingredient which makes a really first-class Private Secretary. I know that when I was a private Secretary, I realised that not only had you to do what you were told to do, which in my case was often very little, but you had constantly to be thinking whether you could ease your chief's work or add to his pleasure in moments of



recreation by inventing amusements, methods of greasing the wheels, and so forth. I failed because my ideas were always better than my methods of carrying them out. I suppose Drummond was the best private secretary ever known, and of course my chief was a much older man than myself, whom I had never known except as a private secretary, and for whom I had hero worship. Therefore I cannot apply the same standards to my people; but although neither of them has ever made any difficulty in doing what I have asked; although neither of them could have been excelled in their devotion and conscientiousness, this Drummond part of the business has never been applied.

“Parsons is a very strange fellow—enormously likeable and affectionate, shy with all the faults of very dark people. I could not have wanted anything better than he has given me, except what we have often talked about together—his lack of social conscientiousness. However, I do not believe I could have existed without him.”

The Diary ends on 11 May 1918 on the train from Paris to Boulogne.

“The time has now come when I must bring this series of notes to an end. I am so conscious of its reflecting often contradictory moods of days and hours that I have never had the courage to read it, but it has at any rate, served the purpose of keeping a record of events and opinions as they were formed, and of avoiding a series of letter-writing.

“I have wished more than I can say that I had attempted something of this kind throughout the days I have lived—the Budget of 1909; the crisis of the war; the crisis of conscription; Morley’s resignation; negotiations on Home Rule; and, above all, the great crisis which led to the formation of the present Ministry. I have known more of these things than almost any living man. I think during the last five years of Asquith’s reign I knew him more intimately than anyone else, and I wish I could have put it all down in the same way that I have put down the uninteresting material of this journey to India. Perhaps one day I shall trust my memory and a few scattered notes to do it, but it will never be the same thing, nor do I suppose that the future is likely to be so interesting from my point of view as the past.”

Besides sending instalments of the Diary to his wife by every mail, Montagu wrote to her regularly, telling of his longing to get home. Venetia on her side wrote regularly giving a lively picture of how she spent her days—work at hospitals, the tragic deaths of one after the other of the coterie, lunches and gay dinners with friends on leave, the progress of work at Breccles, an overdraft of £6,000 and consequent financial panic. The work at Breccles went under the supervision of Lutyens during all the time of Montagu's absence and (surprisingly enough), the fear that the Government would stop private building was never realised. By 21 March 1918 Venetia had "got a nucleus for the Breccles Library. Shakespeare, Pope, Milton (only P. Lost), Gibbon, Jane Austen and the Brontes. A comic selection. None of them very nice, but all respectable calf-bound gentlemen's books."

The letters include a spicing of gossip, including Venetia's own emotional vagaries, which, she explained, she narrated frankly to her husband, as he would be sure to hear of them from someone else. The guests at the parties at 24 Queen Anne's Gate included Asquith and Birrell besides contemporary young things (Venetia was still only thirty).

#### MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD REPORT

The Constitutional Reforms based on the Report to which Montagu devoted the remaining years of his political life and which form his main contribution to History failed in their purpose of gradually bringing freedom and self-government to India by peaceful means and by stages acceptable both to British and to Indian public opinion. But this failure was partly due to the events at Amritsar in April 1919 and their aftermath, to the Rowlatt Act to curb the Press and to the Moslem indignation with the peace terms offered to Turkey. The Reforms failed largely because they were never given a fair chance once 'non-cooperation' had started in August 1920.

But in 1918 Montagu had won the grudging half-acceptance of both Moderate Indians, who thought his scheme insufficient, and of the Government of India and the Indian Civil Service, who regarded steps towards self-government as a necessary evil to be taken in the smallest doses. No one but Montagu could have achieved even this partial and (as it proved) short-lived success.



Montagu would, at any rate, in some moods, have liked to go much further in giving India self-government, but this was ruled out by the Conservative outlook of the Cabinet and Parliament in the United Kingdom and of the Government of India and the Indian Civil Service, and at times Montagu himself was impressed by the example of Russia which seemed to show that a premature grant of self-government would lead to chaos and anarchy.

Assuming that, on the one hand, the promise of eventual self-government given to India in August 1917 could not be withdrawn, and that, on the other hand, India could not immediately be given full self-government, some compromise was inevitable, and the compromise could only take one of two forms: either to give elected Indians power to discuss, with no executive responsibility, or to give them executive responsibility for a limited number of subjects and thus to train them for further responsibility. The latter plan had been suggested to Lionel Curtis and the Round Table Group by Sir William Duke, a member of the Secretary of State for India's Council in 1915 and was advocated by Curtis after a visit to India in 1916. It was later named Diarchy. Its critics were many, but none ever suggested a better way of achieving self-government by successive stages.

The essence of the scheme was to train Indians to govern themselves by granting self-government in the Provinces for certain subjects, such as education and health, but not at present to extend self-government to other subjects, such as Law and Order. Each provincial Government would consist of two parts—Ministers in charge of "transferred" subjects and an Executive Council in charge of "reserved" subjects. After the first ten years and thereafter at intervals of twelve years, a Royal Commission was to consider the possibility of further progress on the road to complete self-government.

At the end of the Report, it is recognised that the scheme seems odd and complicated.

"354... because it contemplates transitional arrangements, it is open to criticisms which can always be effectively directed against all such plans. Hybrid Executives, limited responsibility, assemblies partly elected and partly nominated, divisions of functions, reservations general or particular, are devices that can have no permanent

abiding place. They bear on their faces their transitional character; and they can be worked only if it is clearly recognised that that is their justification and their purpose. They cannot be so devised as to be logical. They must be charged with potentialities of friction. Hope of avoiding mischief lies in facing the fact that they are temporary expedients for training purposes, and providing that the goal is not merely kept in sight, but made attainable, not by agitation but by the operation of machinery inherent in the scheme itself. The principle laid down was the progressive realisation of responsible government.

“We have chosen the province as the unit in which it should be realised. Within that unit, we intend, as far as possible, immediate and complete responsibility in local affairs: responsibility within provincial governments in certain subjects, first to constituencies and then to legislative councils: the reservation of other matters to a part of the executive government whose responsibility to Parliament shall for the time being continue; a machinery for periodic inquiry with a view to the progressive diminution and eventual disappearance of the reserved subjects. . . . For these temporary purposes we have selected after a prolonged examination of alternatives what seemed to us the best transitional mechanism.”

For such compromises, however inevitable, it was difficult to arouse the enthusiasm of those who asked simply for Home Rule.

The Report concludes:

“We believe that the announcement of August 20th was right and wise; and the policy which it embodies is the only possible policy for India. . . . We are not setting about to stir 95% of the people out of their peaceful conservatism and setting their feet on a new and difficult path merely at the bidding of the other 5%. . . . Our reason is the faith that is in us. We have shown how step by step British policy in India has been steadily directed to a point at which the question of self-governing India was bound to arise; how impulses, at first faint, have been encouraged by education and opportunity; how the growth quickened nine years ago and was immeasurably accelerated by the war. We measure it not by the crowds at political meetings or the multiplication of newspapers; but by the infallible signs that indicate growth of character. We



believe profoundly that the time has now come when the sheltered existence we have given India cannot be prolonged without damage to her national life; that we have a richer gift for her people than any we have yet bestowed on them; that nationhood within the Empire represents something better than India has yet attained; that the placid contentment of the masses is not the soil on which such Indian nationhood will grow, and that in deliberately disturbing it, we are working for her highest good."

The Congress regarded the proposals of the Montagu-Chelmsford Report as "disappointing and unsatisfactory" and asked, among other things for a statutory guarantee that full responsible government should be established within fifteen years; but, when the Act of 1919 had been passed, Congress decided in December 1919 to work it, "so as to secure an early establishment of full responsible government."<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> *Report of 34th Indian National Congress*, p. 176.

## CHAPTER XII

### *Duel with Curzon (1918)*

THE REPORT had recommended a further stage of transferring responsibility to elected Indian representatives in the Provinces after five years, but the Government of India timidly rejected this important recommendation. Accordingly Montagu's first letter to Chelmsford after his return was a grumble.

“May 16th 1918

“I was very disappointed in the despatch from your Council. After all, as far as I can charge my memory, we modified and modified until nearly everything had been approved by them. I thought there might be one outstanding point of Vincent's and one or two of Nair's about which they might or might not kick over the traces, but I did expect something a little less guarded, a despatch which would not damn so completely with its faint praise, something that promised support at any rate in outline or principle, and I am eagerly awaiting explanations, for it seems so different from what we had a right to expect. However, I suppose the Viceroy and the Secretary of State must be contented with being called statesmanlike by their colleagues.”

Montagu was not a member of the War Cabinet<sup>1</sup> and his link with it was Curzon, who acted as ‘Rapporteur’ to the War Cabinet on Indian affairs. This led to a fascinating correspondence for both had a passion for putting their feelings on paper. They were as temperamentally opposed as a Conservative and a Radical can be. That they disliked each other must have been obvious to

<sup>1</sup> From December 1916 to October 1919 the normal Cabinet was replaced by the small War Cabinet (Lloyd George, Bonar Law, Curzon, Milner and Carson). In October a normal Cabinet was restored and Montagu was again a member of the Cabinet, as he had previously been from February to May 1915 as Chancellor of the Duchy and from July to December 1916 as Minister of Munitions.



both. In a letter to *The Times* of 6 July 1914, about the Council of India Bill, Montagu had, before he took office, made his opinion of Curzon clear. "I should be the last to depreciate Lord Curzon's incessant unwearying and uncompromising efforts to perfect administrative efficiency; but I must be permitted to hold that it is carrying indulgence for the opinion of a retired Indian administrator, however great, too far to acquiesce in his assumption that 'the force of nature can no further go' than the high-water mark of his own seven years' achievement."

Happily Austen Chamberlain acted as an intermediary and toned down some of Montagu's bitterest complaints. For the most part Montagu was polite, but his rather forced and artificial politeness could not conceal his constant irritation. He wrote on 22 May 1918 to Curzon: "May I for a moment revert to your criticism of the Report. Please do not answer. I attach so great an importance to your cooperation and I don't want to worry you as you have been so kind as to devote your attention to the matter."

After dealing at some length with the apparent complexity of the composition of the Executive in the Provinces proposed in the Report, (i.e. "responsible" Ministers of Transferred Subjects plus "irresponsible" officials of Reserved Subjects), the letter ends, "Please do not bother to answer this; please do not read it until you have a moment to call your own".

On 31 May and again on 15 July 1918, Montagu reported as follows to Chelmsford:

"May 31st

"Curzon has very little complimentary to say about the Report and has not committed himself to any criticism of its proposals. He thinks it is a confused document, difficult to follow and complicated in its recommendations. But that is only the manner of the Grand Mogul, and at any rate he is in favour of its immediate publication. If you or I felt unhappy about his strictures, a corrective might be supplied in the following quotation from a letter I have received from the President of the Board of Education, H. A. L. Fisher, who is at least a good a judge of style as Curzon: 'Let me congratulate you on a great State document, closely argued, ingeniously contrived and admirably written. I hope that it may be published with as little delay as may be'."

“June 15th

“I have had an exciting time with the War Cabinet on Indian affairs. I find Chamberlain a tower of strength,—indeed, what I should have done without him I do not know. I have had many a long talk with him, and he is always ready to advise and suggest and to do it in so nice a way that I have got into the habit of seeking his advice whenever I can.

“Curzon, on the other hand, amuses me, interests me, irritates me. Extraordinarily easy to deal with in the upshot, but oh! what a process! Do you know that one of my daily duties is to write a letter to Curzon! Every day he wants information about some Indian matter; every day he is critical about something or other; and he seems to find time to read the million and one papers which a War Cabinet Minister has to read, to write in his own handwriting any number of letters to his colleagues, and it will amuse you that on a day when I know that he had two meetings of the War Cabinet and a meeting of the Eastern Committee, every paper relevant to all three of which he had read, my wife said that she discovered him at Harrod's Stores registering for tea!

“I can now understand how it is that Lady Curzon complains that she is not even allowed to engage her own under-housemaids, and why it is that I received an invitation to dinner next week on a printed card addressed to me in Curzon's own hand-writing, and I presume he had done the same to about forty other guests! What a man!

“I had imagined in conversation with Curzon that his criticisms of our Report were really based on detail, but I think he sees a great deal of Sydenham, and he fired in a Memorandum, not opposing our recommendations, but warning his colleagues against any hasty decision, saying that we were making revolutionary changes in India and pointing out that we were doing what both Crewe and Morley had said was an impossibility. He pointed out with great force the danger of publication, but then said that on the other hand he was in favour of publication on condition that neither you nor I were allowed to explain or defend. Chamberlain answered him with very great vigour. I left it entirely to Chamberlain, thinking that this would have more influence with the Cabinet, and nothing could have been more gratifying than his defence. He pointed out that the things which Curzon objected to in our Report



in principle were objections to the announcement of the 20th August, and not to our Report. And when it came to the Cabinet, I told them that the Cabinet might well refuse to accept responsibility at this stage for our Report without consideration. That was a point of view that I understood. But I said that you and I were responsible up to the neck: we could not get away from our responsibility, published or unpublished; that I hoped I would show, and I knew you would show, the humility and receptivity necessary on matters of detail, but that I absolutely declined to continue in office without being allowed to say anything and to arrange for anything being said on behalf of the Report that I thought fit, always safeguarding the fact that, as I announced in the House of Commons last week, the Cabinet has not yet accepted responsibility; in fact that I proposed to commit myself to a vigorous defence in the House of Commons and outside it, and a vigorous influencing of public opinion in its favour, and that I relied upon you to do the same in India and even to receive deputations about its recommendations and to forward them to me with your opinion on them. (I hope your Governors will do the same).

“In face of all this, Curzon collapsed. The Cabinet, except for Curzon, would have rushed into accepting responsibility generally.”

On 1 July 1918 the Cabinet agreed to the publication of the Report without any endorsement by the Cabinet of its proposals at this stage, and left Curzon, Chamberlain and Montagu to settle the question of appointing Committees to discuss detailed aspects.

Meanwhile the Report was published and Montagu records a fairly successful interview with Sydenham and the Indo-British Association on 4 July and he wrote to Austen Chamberlain:

“You have been such a good friend to me that I must hasten to tell you that I did not have an unsatisfactory interview with the Sydenham crowd yesterday morning. Sydenham sat there in the centre immobile, with that wonderful expression which one so often sees at sea, as though he hoped and feared that he was going to be sick! However, the Indo-British Association does not seem to me to be out for whole-hearted opposition . . . .

“I have had a telegram from Chelmsford. Willingdon and Pent-

land [Governors of Bombay and Madras] have not yet expressed an opinion on the Report. I know the latter will think the scheme bad, dangerous, and that Willingdon will think it does not go nearly far enough and has too many constitutional safeguards. He thinks that all constitutions in India might safely be left to the winning and dominating personality of the Governor of Bombay! Ronaldshay [Governor of Bengal] is very cordial in support. Robertson [Chief Commissioner of Central Provinces] is cordial in support. Butler [Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces], and O'Dwyer, [Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab] according to his telegram, both regard the scheme as workable in their provinces. This, I think, is fairly satisfactory, don't you?"

As regards the Press, Montagu wrote to Chelmsford as follows:

"June 15th

"I have got *The Times* quite easily. Chirol, who is writing for *The Times* has been bitten by Curtis with the Two Governments plan for the Provinces. I had him and Roberts to lunch and I think weakened him. The 'Round Table' is almost unanimous on this point, Philip Kerr,<sup>2</sup> who has much influence with the Prime Minister, being strongly a supporter of our alternatives.

"I have formed two Committees in the India Office, one is to get on with the draft of a Bill, one to arrange for propaganda. I am hopeful that you have got a similar scheme at work for considering propaganda.

"I have got the *Observer*; Garvin [Editor of the *Observer*] is a person of considerable influence. I am making arrangements next week to try and get the *Daily Telegraph* . . . ."

"July 8th

"I have sent you an analysis of the Press criticism received on Saturday morning. I am disappointed with the *Daily Telegraph*, over which I took some trouble. But whenever a leader writer on Indian questions says that East is East and West is West etc. you know he is pretty hopeless! The *Morning Post* is only to be expected.

<sup>2</sup> Philip Kerr, Lord Lothian (1882-1940), C.H., K.T., Private Secretary to Lloyd George, 1916-21; Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, 1931-32; Ambassador at Washington, 1939-40.



I hate that sort of thing and it wounds me more than I can say. It would appear that our proposals are going to suffer by my connection with them—encouraging, isn't it? to one who has only one purpose in the world, to get something like them through."

As regards the appointment of Committees, a meeting between Curzon, Chamberlain and Montagu took place on 11 July 1918. It started acrimoniously and Montagu had to leave in the middle of the discussion. He drafted a letter to Chamberlain the next day in a gloomy frame of mind. "I am bound to confess that I am particularly and very much exercised by Curzon's attitude. It seems to me to be a non-courageous attitude, the attitude of a man who intensely dislikes my proposals, daren't say so, and clings desperately to the concommittal attitude of the Government as a means of avoiding indicating even to me what his real view on any proposal is." This letter was not sent, since Montagu received an encouraging and sagacious letter from Chamberlain, who wrote:

"Curzon and I had a little further discussion after you left us yesterday. He spoke very nicely of his real desire to come to an agreement with us, both for our own sakes and in order to avoid troubling the other members of the Cabinet in a matter with which they were not very familiar. He agreed to the appointment of the two Indian Committees<sup>3</sup> on the understanding that in respect of the Committee on devolved and transferred subjects we were not committed to more than the principle, and in respect to that on franchises that we were not committed to the particular framework and constitution of the Councils in the Provinces and Government of India.

"He said that upon these two subjects he thought he could make a good case in the House of Lords without embarking on matters which had been in controversy. He hoped that you would accept this offer and not press for your India Office Committee or for immediate Indianisation of the services . . . .

"If you can accept the two Committees as a satisfactory compromise, then I think you should write to that effect to Curzon

<sup>3</sup> On the division between transferred and reserved subjects and on the Franchises.

and prepare a submission to the Cabinet in which the three of us could concur.

“P. S. I am sure that you will feel that there is a real desire for agreement here and no possible justification for a breach. You must bear in mind that you (and I to a large extent) are getting our way. It is Curzon who by the nature of things is doing the *giving* and I think we ought to be patient, conciliatory and forbearing; and to recognise fully in our own minds how far he has gone to meet us. *The* great thing from the point of view of yourself, myself, Sinha (taken as types) at the present moment is to avoid a ‘bust up’. I believe we can carry all that even in your view or Sinha’s is essential if we keep cool and are patient with others whose support is most valuable and whose difficulties (arising from the past) are much greater than yours or mine.”

To this, on the same day, Montagu replied:

“I can only write to you in terms of the deepest gratitude and appreciation. Indeed, when I think how helpless I should be without you and how much I am continually worrying you, I am at a loss to know how to express myself.

“I will bear in mind carefully all the excellent advice you gave me and all the considerations you advance. I should indeed be ungrateful if I did not try to my utmost to adopt your point of view.

“Let me however remind you, and I am sure you will not take it amiss, that I had a terribly difficult task in India, that I spent the most hectic time urging, cajoling and persuading. I felt the responsibility of my position more than I can say. I had Curzon’s statement, recorded in the minutes of the War Cabinet, that the Cabinet would in all probability accept anything that you and the Viceroy agreed upon, and I felt that now that I had stepped into your shoes I must try to my utmost so far as was consistent with my own ideas to recommend the sort of thing that would commend itself to you. I used my duty to the Cabinet in argument again and again with Indians. I extolled the progressive attitude of Curzon’s mind, and I assured them that they had nothing to fear from him, that he was with us in the pronouncement and that he was too honourable and upright a man ever to make a pronouncement



that he did not intend to carry out. I felt grateful to Curzon for I knew how much all this is costing him. I never failed to wish that I could show him some appreciation by minimising the differences between us, but whether it be on the Eastern Committee or in former years on Air Board matters, we are always coming into conflict, conflict in which I continually have to keep myself in hand.

“Now in this matter there are many things, believe me, that I would have done and recommended in India which I did not do or recommend because I desired to work with Curzon as a loyal member of the Government in which we were colleagues. I had proposals to make about the Viceroyalty. I dropped them, I did not believe that government in India is so precarious that we cannot risk in the Government of India a non-Official majority in the Council of State. I gave way. My Indianisation proposals would have been more nearly 50 per cent, as indeed they were William Vincent’s, I gave way. I believe I could have carried something more advanced with Chelmsford than I actually carried. I had all the time in mind Curzon and my responsibility . . . .

“If you will understand this, if you will realise how I have tried to be loyal to Curzon’s difficulties throughout, then I can wholeheartedly accept your advice as to the attitude that I should adopt in dealing with him.”

On 16 July 1918 Montagu wrote to Curzon:

“... I am animated by one desire, and one desire only—to do what I think is necessary and nothing more, with unfailing anxiety to meet in a spirit of colleagueship your views and your difficulties. I put my signature to a document which was in no sense all that I could desire. I went to India as your colleague, I had fresh in my mind, and indeed with me, your views as stated in various War Cabinet meetings in Chamberlain’s time and my own, and I bore in mind the whole time the part you played in coming to a decision as to the announcement and what was to follow from it. I endeavoured (time will show how far I have succeeded) to put forward proposals due from me as your colleague, knowing that you and I were in agreement in the announcement that I was asked to carry out, and I only recite this because I want to assure you that I am

not unmindful of the necessity of considering not only one's own view but the view of the Government of which one is a member, so far of course as one can consistently with one's principles, and I want to assure you that as I began so I intend to go on.

"I don't want to do anything to force the pace. I cannot be a gainer thereby. On the other hand I cannot jeopardise the success of what I have set my heart on. I am putting forward therefore *no* proposal which has for its object getting the Cabinet to-day or now to accept the actual proposals contained in our Report. Please take that assurance from me. I want to complete, however, the steps that are necessary in order to proceed with Reforms and in order that the Cabinet may in due course lay before the House of Commons their proposals based on the Report."

Curzon, when pressed for a reply, wrote on 23 July 1918 that he had authorised Chamberlain to tell Montagu that he would "agree most reluctantly to the two Committees, provided that they were not held to commit the Government to the least degree to the acceptance of the scheme and provided you did not persist in your other proposals which had not been mentioned to the Cabinet or referred to us to decide. I thought this matter was settled, subject to anything you might wish to say to me. Then you wrote me a letter raising a number of other points" on which Curzon promised to reply in a day or two. Montagu (instead of waiting quietly for a further letter) replied on the same day, saying "I write to you again only to try and disabuse your mind of what I now fear you think in all your correspondence with me, that I am trying to press you. Nothing is further from my mind."

Montagu to his "intense dismay" received a ten-page letter from Curzon the peroration of which seems to deserve quotation both as a magnificent piece of rhetoric and as an illuminating exposition of what was really in Curzon's mind.

Curzon reminded Montagu that the Indian Reforms question had been before the War Cabinet on 29 May, 7 June and 26 June. Not till 26 June had Chamberlain proposed the two Committees. On 1 July this was briefly discussed, but adjourned. Curzon, Chamberlain and Montagu had met; Curzon had reluctantly agreed to the two Committees, but could not, for reasons which he gave, agree to further proposals. Curzon felt that there was no apparent



finality about any decisions or any agreement arrived at with regard to India and that he and the Cabinet "are continually being squeezed into fresh positions which will probably end by fatally compromising our independence." This letter continued:

"Now I come to your Report. We decided to publish it and no more for the present. But ever since, pressure has been, and I am confident will continue to be, applied to agree first to one thing and then to another, until inevitably we shall have forfeited our liberty of action and shall be committed to proceedings of which some of us may at bottom disapprove.

"You have, naturally enough, in your mind, not merely your own hopes and aspirations, but a House of Commons predisposed to advanced proposals, which there are probably not 12 men in that House of Commons who are really qualified to understand. I have in my mind both my own convictions, based at least upon some experience, and the knowledge that if I am still a member of the Government when legislation is introduced, I shall be held largely responsible for it, and that in the House of Lords, where there are a good many people with Indian experience, while it will only be with the utmost difficulty that advanced proposals will be carried at all, if I am unable to endorse them, the likelihood of their being accepted will be materially reduced.

"In these circumstances I want to keep myself free until the results of the various investigations come in; and I am made more and more uncomfortable as successive steps are taken or proposed which appear to cut away foot by foot the somewhat precarious ground upon which I stand. After all, we are a Coalition Government, and such a condition implies compromise in excess of that which is a condition of all Governments. In many respects I have gone very far, but the sense of being perpetually pushed does not heighten one's zest in going further.

"Your latest letter, i. e. of July 23rd, of the extreme courtesy and friendliness of which I am more than sensible, does nothing to remove this impression, for in one place you not obscurely indicate that even if the pressure be temporarily relaxed I must expect it to be renewed in the autumn.

"Why are we always to be called upon in the case of India, as of Ireland, to give evidence of our good faith? Why are we always

to be told that the moderates (who are generally the funklers) are on the verge of going over to the enemy, and can only be arrested by the particular concession involved?

“Why is it necessary to proceed at breakneck speed in a case that constitutes a revolution of which not one person in a thousand in this country realises the magnitude, and which will probably lead by stages of increasing speed to the ultimate disruption of the Empire? The suggested reforms will probably in some respects be quite futile; in others the harm they do will very likely have been grossly exaggerated. But they will drive certain perhaps unsuspected roots deep into the soil, which will shake the foundations of the entire structure both of Indian Society and of British rule. I heard Morley say all the things that you are saying now. He has subsequently written a book to prove what wonderful things he did. But before seven years have elapsed you go out and compose another book to prove that he was all wrong and that his feats were fiascos. I shrink from applying any moral except that haste and confidence are liable in Indian undertakings to rude disappointment. My own experience in India was not devoid of such demonstrations.”

Inevitably Montagu drafted a controversial reply, which concluded:

“Perhaps the sentence in your letter which caused me the most serious anxiety and misgiving is the one in which you say that you are being asked to proceed at a breakneck speed in a case that constitutes a revolution which will probably lead by stages of increasing speed to the ultimate disruption of the Empire. I hope you do not mean this. If so, I can only review our future relations with the greatest possible anxiety. . . . I wish I could convince you that what I seek is cooperation with you and not controversy. It is your accord and not your reluctant acquiescence which it is my ambition to obtain.”

At Chamberlain's suggestion, Montagu agreed to send a somewhat more conciliatory reply on 30 July 1918.

“I want to make an appeal to you. Controversy with you distresses



me very much. You talk in your letter of my hopes and aspirations. My hope and aspiration is to carry forward a continuous Indian policy, that is the only one I have. I want to continue the policy of Morley, Crewe, Chamberlain [successive Secretaries of State, 1906-1917], and Hardinge [Viceroy 1911-1916], with your support and assistance. It was you who helped in the pronouncement of 20th August, [1917]: it was you who supported the suggestion that I should go to India; it was you who said 'it was most important that he should go out with all the authority of the Secretary of State for India, although persons of high position and independent views should be associated with him. In that event, His Majesty's Government would be most unlikely to reject the decision at which he might arrive.' This of course referred to Mr. Chamberlain, but I do assure you that all the way through I remembered that I was your colleague and his, and endeavoured to produce what you would call a Coalition scheme. . . .

"It has been a matter of infinite regret to me that since our preliminary talk on the Report, we have never had another discussion upon it. Won't you let me help you make up your mind? If you see points for criticism, why won't you let me try and answer them? I seek for nothing but to act as a colleague. I would regret nothing so much as that we should find ourselves finally in opposition to one another. If therefore I could only get you to believe that all I am asking now is assent to the necessary steps for completing my proposals and then your cooperation in framing the necessary Bill! I do hope and trust that you will dismiss from your mind any suggestion that you are being rushed or squeezed, that you will not allow your mind to crystallise previous to discussion with me and that we may go forward to carry out the policy of 20th August together.

"It is because I hope that I can convince you that what I want is to proceed without a halt, but not at a breakneck speed, that I do not pause now to comment on one sentence in your letter which shocked me very much: 'A revolution which will probably lead by stages of increasing speed to the ultimate disruption of the Empire.' Surely you did not mean this! So far as I can see, it must apply, if it applies at all, to the pronouncement of the 20th August—but Oh well! I am more than anxious to avoid controversy and I forbear to write further on this subject."

Montagu wisely did not tell Chelmsford in any detail about Curzon's outburst, but wrote to him on 26 July in a depressed frame of mind, and kept him informed of the ups and downs during July and September 1918.

"July 26th 1918

"I cannot pretend to be happy about our Reforms scheme. I must tell you quite frankly that there is very little driving force behind it in this country. Chamberlain is still supporting without intermission and with the utmost loyalty. Curzon, although not in the open against us, is continually refusing to take any step because he has not had time to make up his mind. Chamberlain believes we shall land him too. I have grave doubts. . . .

"Next I am bound to say that I am anxious about the situation in India. I cannot think that a scheme, however good, can stand on its own through the inevitable delays, particularly with the Extremists fighting it. We argued this again and again in Delhi, and I remember our agreement that Civil Servants are unaccustomed to political warfare and would have to be coaxed and persuaded to do it. I do not think myself that your Publicity Board fills the bill, particularly as Vincent is not really as whole-hearted a supporter as we could have; and I would beg you never to lose an opportunity of seeing how you can best organise a strong fighting force in favour of our scheme."

"August 7th 1918

"The Reforms Scheme goes better. In fact the *Morning Post* and Sydenham seem to me to be more and more isolated. Their opposition helps us probably with the Indians, but of course our difficulties will come on what critics call details and we should regard as principles."

"August 22nd 1918

"As regards Curzon, he still maintains an attitude of aloofness, resisting as long as he can any movement forward and clearly indicating, I think, his dislike of the whole business. I cannot help thinking myself that he will give way in the end, and I am availing myself at each stage of Chamberlain's advice in order that if it comes to a fight between us, I can prove to my colleagues that I have exercised that quality which you were always instilling



into me, both by precept and example—patience. I am shortly going to ask that a Cabinet Committee be appointed to draw up the Government proposals.”

“September 5th 1918

“I am in a very difficult position. It is so disheartening to find that lack of interest in Indian affairs, excused now because of the preoccupations of the war but I am afraid always present, is one of our greatest obstacles. I cannot get the Prime Minister to take the slightest interest in the matter, and I always suspect that he feels uninterested because of the opposition of the vocal Home Rulers in India. Meanwhile the position of a Secretary of State who hardly ever sees any of his colleagues, who is not a member of the Cabinet, is so difficult and so different from anything to which I have been accustomed, that although I value your cheerful messages and propose to be as patient as I possibly can, it is wearing work, and the imminence of a General Election here makes it all the more necessary for me, if I am to remain a member of this Government, to ensure that if they are successful at the polls, they will pursue our policy. They have made such a mess of Ireland that it behoves us to be particularly careful that they are not allowed to use us to make a similar mess of India. I have tried for many days to get a talk with the Prime Minister but have not yet succeeded; I do not lose hope.”

“September 25th 1918

“Sometimes as I sit here I wish that I had remained in India long enough to complete our Reform Scheme. We have now launched our two Committees. I hope it will give you less of a pang than it gives me to devolve on to other shoulders this important completing work. Can they love it as its fathers love it?”

“October 10th 1918

“I am studying the Rowlatt Report<sup>4</sup> with great care. There is much in its recommendations which is most repugnant to my mind. I do most awfully want to help you to stamp out rebellion and revolution, but I loathe the suggestion at first sight of preserving the Defence of India Act in peace time to such an extent as Rowlatt and his friends think necessary. Why cannot these things

<sup>4</sup> On combating sedition in India.

be done by normal, or even exceptional, processes of law? I hate to give the Pentlands of this world and the O'Dwyers the chance of locking up a man without trial."

"October 22nd 1918

"I wish I could have had you by my side as I stood by the throne in the House of Lords and listened to the two days' debate upon us. I am afraid the speeches delivered and the attitude of your Lordship's House will have a bad effect in India and depress those who hope that without delay they will get what we have designed for them. The Lords were very hostile, and the speeches were directed in my opinion either against the announcement of the 20th August or to defending an attitude which says it accepts the announcement but will do nothing to carry it out. . . . I am aching for an opportunity of saying something more, and when I get one. I shall tell people quite frankly that if they can find anything different to do from what we have recommended, by all means do it, but I am perfectly certain that they cannot do less, and any attempt to do less than to carry out a well balanced scheme, which has aroused no enthusiasm from Extremists on either side, would be fatal to British rule in India.

"They have really got to choose between Lord Lansdowne, who was Viceroy thirty years ago, and Lord Chelmsford, who happens to be Viceroy now. India is really not a crytallised fruit, India is not a stuffed bird. The constitution of India is really not a perfect piece of architecture which one must not disturb. It is the instrument of Government of a living and progressive country, and you cannot always be looking back over your shoulder in veneration of the past.

"... A year ago to-day, as far as my recollection serves me, we had got to Egypt. Our cargo has crossed many seas and encountered many dangers and is by no means in port yet. But I am happier about it than I was, and, as you rightly say, even if we do not land it ourselves, it has now got to such a stage that one day the cargo will be landed. I still think it is a good ship."

On 1 October 1918 Montagu prophesied a Minister for Science—a prophesy destined to be fulfilled after forty-one years. He wrote to Curzon:



"I feel bound to address you on the subject of the War Cabinet Minutes of Friday, September 27th, when I notice that a Committee was appointed under your Chairmanship to consider a recommendation of the Admiralty on a Physical Research Institution.

"The lay mind does not always differentiate sufficiently clearly between design on the one hand and research and experiment on the other, but I am emphatically of opinion that when research is yoked under the same Department with the direct application of that research, research always in the long run suffers. It is the case with all scientific investigation, and it is the case with educational research. For that reason I have always welcomed and endeavoured to stimulate the grouping of all branches of research, the results of which will be available to all Government Departments, under the Lord President of the Council. Whether the Lord President of the Council may, if the matter grows, eventually be replaced in this connection by a Minister of research, remains for history to disclose, but I am confident that it would be a grievous mistake in organisation to allow different departments to continue to conduct or to initiate research on their own behalf."

Meantime on Indian Reforms a calmer atmosphere prevailed between Montagu and Curzon. After a "very satisfactory interview" on 22 October 1918 Montagu wrote to Curzon about a forthcoming debate in the Lords on Indian Reforms: "I would entreat you if you can, to say something expressing more than a purely non-committal attitude about the Reforms. If you find that you can't, I shall not complain in the least, but I would like to ask you if you could." Curzon replied at some length that he would, in fairness to Montagu, conceal his doubts ("there are some features in your scheme which I regard with grave alarm"), he could not be expected to exaggerate the degree of his support.

Montagu reported his impressions of the debate in a letter to the Prime Minister on 25 October 1918:

"The debate in the House of Lords on Indian questions yesterday was instructive and amusing. It may, I fear, depress Moderate opinion in India who may think their chances of getting anything through are small. But it was interesting to listen to a whole series of speeches made by men who seemed to think that the world

has not moved during the past twenty years and that the Government of India is something which is intended to endure for all time without any change or modification.

“I am sure it will interest you to know, for you have not time to bother about these things, that Lord Curzon made a helpful speech and has now withdrawn from his opposition to the appointment of the Cabinet Committee about which I circulated a Memorandum.”

On 30 October Montagu consulted Chamberlain about the Chairmanship of the Committee on the India Office, to which Crewe was eventually appointed. The letter is mainly of interest because it gives Montagu's views on some of his contemporaries.

“The names that have occurred to me were Crewe or Harcourt. Curzon objects to both, Crewe because he introduced a Bill for the reform of the India Office which Curzon succeeded in getting defeated in the House of Lords. Of course that Bill is right out of date and Curzon would, I think, perhaps give way. But there is something to be said, isn't there? for not having an ex-Secretary of State as Chairman. He is almost certain to be biased in favour of the existing state of affairs, and I would like a more impartial man. Therefore I think Harcourt is the best. He has a very wide knowledge of many offices, the Colonial Office, the Office of Works, the Board of Trade, and so on. He has great ingenuity and great energy. Curzon objects to him because he says that he does not inspire confidence and is an intriguer. Well, well, well! Far be it from me to comment on these things, but one has got to choose imperfect men in an imperfect world.

“Curzon's own suggestions are people like Lord George Hamilton,<sup>5</sup> Lord Bryce, Lord Grey, Sir Mortimer Durand.<sup>6</sup> Most of these people suffer from the defects of approximating to a hundred years of age. [Actually 73, 60, 56 and 67.] Durand has no administrative experience. Grey cannot, I fear, be considered for one

<sup>5</sup> Lord George Hamilton (1845-1927), G.C.S.I., First Lord of the Admiralty, 1885-1892; Secretary of State for India, 1895-1903; Chairman of Mesopotamia Commission, 1917.

<sup>6</sup> Sir Mortimer Durand (1851-1929), K.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., Foreign Secretary to Government of India in 1885; Ambassador at Washington in 1905.



moment. He can't read a paper. Bryce is the best, but he only knows the Irish Office and he also is very old, [only 60!] although if I cannot find a better man I would not mind him.

"Then there are other suggestions which have been made to me. Runciman, who probably would refuse, and who Curzon and I agree might probably not do because the Prime Minister would not like him. There is Buckmaster, who perhaps would be good. You know more of him, I think, than I do, because you worked with him. He is a sentimental old thing and as hot-tempered as they make 'em, but as an ex-Lord Chancellor perhaps there is something to be said for him. Simon's character and type of mind I dislike so much that I cannot consider him. After I have thrown these names at you, I am afraid there is nobody else I can think of."

The Armistice and the subsequent General Election were by now drawing near.

On 7 November 1918 Montagu wrote to Chelmsford:

"the Prime Minister [Lloyd George] yesterday and the day before gave before witnesses explicit assurances that, whatever happened, he was going on with the intention of carrying out our Reform policy. This is important because it will qualify and effect decisions which I have got to take during the next few hours. You may be sure that I will not lightly abandon this prospect of bringing our ship to harbour. On the other hand, for it I may be called upon to make sacrifices greater than I can make. Asquith has hoisted a party flag and the old Liberal Party in which I was brought up, in which I thoroughly believed, appears to me to be dead. It looks as if I shall become a member of a so-called Coalition which consists of the whole Conservative Party, a few Liberal members disowned by their organisation, and a few Labour members repudiated by the Labour that they represent. This doesn't matter, but Liberal principles will, thank goodness, survive. If the differences remain, as they seem to me to be now, those of persons, my course is clear. If they become differences of principle, it remains for me to decide how many I can temporarily abandon or still in order to support a Government, which I think ought to remain in charge of our destinies and in order to get an Indian Bill through. The perplexities will have been solved before this letter reaches you."

At the time of the Armistice Montagu wrote to Ronaldshay:

“November 21st 1918

“The end of the war has come quicker than any of us dared to expect, and the acceptance of the Armistice terms—onerous as they are—is a measure of the enemies’ collapse. The Germans managed to keep their shop windows well dressed till the last moment, and their troops fought during the last months with an obstinacy which hardly justified one anticipating such an immediate breakdown. But there was nothing behind, and we are assured that had the war continued a few days more there would have been a German disaster on a scale for which history affords no parallel. The new German Government will have immense difficulty in holding the country together, but they seem to be setting about their work with characteristic Teuton thoroughness, and with the spectre of Bolshevism and all its horrors on their borders, the German people may be able to withstand that menace to society.

“You can imagine the feeling of relief that spread over London as soon as the news of the Armistice was known. Offices were closed and crowds paraded the streets clambering on the buses, cabs, and any kind of vehicle that was handy. Speaking generally, people behaved themselves well, but there were some unfortunate incidents leading to damage, mainly, I understand, due to the exuberance of Australian troops. As I write spirits have somewhat abated, and we are now engaged on the formidable task of restoring normal conditions of life. In some ways this is even harder than waging war.

“I am off to Cambridge to start my Election Campaign. I dislike it all intensely, and it will be a great relief to me when it is over.”



## CHAPTER XIII

### *Landing Winston (November, 1918)*

THIS CHAPTER consists of two Notes dictated by Montagu on 6 November and 7 November 1918. They show how brilliant a writer of Memoirs Montagu would have been; they also give a clear statement of his political beliefs at this time.

*Secret*

“Dictated Wednesday, 6 November, 1918

“Yesterday at the War Cabinet the Prime Minister asked me particularly to lunch with him, and I attended to find my only fellow-guest was one Mr. Winston Churchill. It became obvious that the Prime Minister was anxious to find out whether he could rely upon our support and it became obvious that the Prime Minister both from personal affection and, rightly, from the importance he attached to him, determined to devote his fishing expedition in the main to landing Winston Churchill. Of this process I was an amused spectator.

“Winston began sulky, morose and unforthcoming. The Prime Minister put out all his weapons. He addressed him with affection as ‘Old man’. He reminded him of their old campaigns. He said that so well did he know him that he knew before he said anything that there was something about which he was unhappy. (This showed great perspicacity on the part of the Prime Minister, partly because Winston’s face had all along been as sullen as you can possibly see it, and partly because for the last six months to my knowledge Winston has been speaking, if not open treason, open disgruntlement, which must have reached the Prime Minister’s ears.)

“Winston began with a dispassionate judicial analysis of the reasons for and against a General Election, ending with the advice that a General Election should be held. I was then asked my opinion, and I said that apart from all merits of the question, having regard to public attention and opinion on the subject, it was too late in my opinion to avoid it.

“Finally, in a torrent of turgid eloquence, Winston exposed his hand. Never, he said, would he allow any personal consideration to weigh with him. He was prepared to serve the State in whatever capacity he thought most advantageous to the State. Opposition was great fun, although opposition to the present Prime Minister would be very distasteful to him. But he would accept it cheerfully if it were forced upon him. And he then began his usual arguments against the great men in the present Cabinet, the impossibility of the present machinery, the degradation of being a Minister without responsibility for policy, and so on. I have heard it so often before.

“The Prime Minister waved it all aside, told him that this was a war measure for war purposes, that with the end of the war the War Cabinet came to an end, that he had made up his mind to have a Gladstone-like Cabinet of something between 10 and 12 and that this present machinery would cease and that all the important Ministers would be in the Cabinet either because of their Offices or because of their position.

“The sullen look disappeared, smiles wreathed the hungry face, the fish was landed. The price had been paid and it is interesting to note that Winston was invited this morning to the sitting of the Imperial War Cabinet although nobody can possibly say that there was any reason for his presence.

“It became then necessary for the Prime Minister to throw a wary fly over the other fish. He turned to me and asked me my opinion. And now of course the Armistice having been signed, victory and peace and all the rest of it reigning between Winston and himself, Winston held the landing net and indeed gave him instructions as to the fly.

“I told him that my misgivings were in no way personal, but that I was very much concerned about matters of policy. He asked me to enumerate them. I began with Home Rule, and he told me that he was a Home Ruler, that Home Rule must be given to Nationalist Ireland, Ulster must not be coerced, that this had been Asquith’s policy, that it was his policy. Winston reminded him that it had been his policy with Lloyd George which they had forced upon Asquith.

“(Be it said that since the lunch there has been a debate on Home Rule in the House of Commons. A bitter party attack was



made on the Government by Herbert Samuel [Viscount Samuel.] A very unpleasant, useless, reprehensible, incriminating attack on the Irish was made by Bonar Law. The debate closed by an amiable, platitudinous, futile speech by Gordon Hewart [Solicitor General] who declared himself a Home Ruler. It is not much use, it seems to me, that people say they are Home Rulers if they don't pass Home Rule, and the debate made me more uneasy than ever about the lunch.)

"The Prime Minister then asked for my next point. I spoke about Free Trade. He said that this was a matter of no importance practically in the Reconstruction Period, and that therefore one had to make some concessions to one's Conservative Allies. I should have thought that there was less need for concessions if it was a matter of no importance, but he told me that he was in favour of assisting key industries, Imperial Preference on existing taxation, and action against dumping, if things were sold below cost price.

"I asked him whether he meant cost price here or there. He said there. I said this made all the difference. He said that it was of no importance. I reminded him and Winston assisted me in reminding him that it was the root of the controversy between the old Protectionists and the old Liberals.

"He asked for the next point. This is the most important of all points. I said to him that if on India there was controversy between me and the Conservatives, would he back me? He said, yes, certainly, always with the provision that some give and take would be necessary to get the policy through. I said this was quite reasonable, I was prepared for it myself, but it depended upon the giving and the taking and on that I would reserve my judgment.

"He asked me if I had anything else. I said that I did not see how through his existing Government he would ever be able to get his policy. Some Conservatives were all right, others were all wrong. He said, yes, but they were not more wrong than Runciman and McKenna. Curzon and Lansdowne might be set against Runciman and McKenna. He said that throughout the time he had been in a Liberal Cabinet everything he had wanted to do had been opposed by everybody and he had never had any assistance except from Asquith.

"(My own belief is that he has already made his agreement

with the Conservatives and that he is gradually leading his Liberals along to accept the policy he has agreed upon. I wish he had said so, it would have been franker.)

“He then ran away and asked Winston and myself to dine with him tonight, when he is introducing into the symposium Addison, Fisher, Hewart and Munro, together with the half-wit, Freddie [Guest] and the inevitable Rufus [Lord Reading.] Then will begin Chapter II.

“I had some talk with Winston after the Prime Minister left the room. Winston was in the seventh heaven of delight. I reminded him of everything he had ever said to me in the last six months about not compromising one hair’s breadth on Free Trade. I reminded him of what he had said about joining Lloyd George for the period of the war, and that then he would revert to his old friends, and that Conservatives were always Conservatives. I only did this for my own amusement. He has a new theory now, that once he joined Lloyd George, he joined him for ever, that he had always been Lloyd George’s man and that he owed nothing to anybody else. But ever and anon he kept on saying: “You see, he has given the whole case away, he is going to have a decent Cabinet.” It was quite clear that this was all that mattered to Winston. I did not pursue the argument, but I could not refrain from reminding him that all that the Prime Minister had said was that he was going to have a Cabinet of 12, and that he had indeed objected when Winston amended it to 14, and that it did not in the least follow that Winston was going to be one of the 12, but there would be great competition for this band of Apostles. I succeeded in interrupting the beatific smile, but he is a happy man.

“My own perplexities are increased. There is no doubt whatever in my mind that a change of Prime Minister at this moment would be fatal, or at any rate at the very best mischievous in the highest degree, and I have not the least doubt that there will not be one. He appears before us as responsible for all the great achievements of the war among politicians, at the Treasury with regard to Credit in 1914, Munitions in 1915, Railways in 1916, Salonika in its inception when he used to send Miss Stevenson<sup>1</sup> to the British Museum to look up its geography, and in its maintenance,—Salonika, which really was the first blow in the winning of the war,—and lastly,

<sup>1</sup> His Secretary, later Countess Lloyd George.



Unity of Command. He has dominated the Versailles Council. In the very difficult time we are going to have with the Bolsheviks on the one hand and the Dominions on the other, the Allies and America, we must have the same man there. On the other hand, I do not see now, after Asquith's unfortunate declaration of war [against the Lloyd George Government], how he is likely to maintain a Liberal policy, no can I but be appalled at the weakness of his Government apart from himself. On the other hand, if he can stick to his policy as he announced it at lunch yesterday, I have no quarrel with him at all.

"Two facts have emerged to-day. Smuts tells me that he saw the Prime Minister yesterday on Reconstruction and he hinted that Lloyd George's answers to the problems were that he was going to reconstruct his Ministry. Well, I know one thing: if this was meant for a hint for me, my position is quite clear. If I go on, and my belief in the Prime Minister is such that I have little doubt that I will, it can only be in my present Office and nowhere else.

"I lunched with Rufus, who was in mourning, like myself, over the follies of the Asquith group and merely kept on harping on the fact that the problem was a very complex one. So it is."

The record of the dinner and the summary of Montagu's political beliefs is an equally interesting document.

### *Private and Secret*

"Dictated Thursday, 7 November

"The great dinner is over. The guests were Gordon Hewart, Fisher, Addison, Munro, Winston, Freddie Guest and myself, Rufus and Megan [Lloyd George], who left after dinner. Rufus was taken ill at the end of dinner and left after we had gone some little way with the discussion.

"George was full of an interview he had had with Lawrence,<sup>2</sup> the Arab man. The result seems to have been that he is very anti-Mark Sykes and anti an Arab Kingdom.

"He was in the best of spirits and gave us stories of the Versailles Conference. He said the betting was two to one that the Germans would accept the Armistice. Winston said it was six to four. (This morning [Sir] Henry Wilson [Chief of the Imperial General Staff]

<sup>2</sup> T. E. Lawrence (1888-1935).

said there was nothing in the military situation which would justify their acceptance, but that if we got to Mezières within the next two days, that might alter matters). He recounted again how he had told the House that we were quite prepared to go on fighting alone for the freedom of the Seas, if America made a separate peace, and he told us of the last Versailles Council when he had told Clemenceau that if Milne were removed from the right flank at Salonika to the left in order that the French might march to Constantinople, he would send a telegram (already drafted) to Milne telling him that he was no longer under the orders of Franchet d'Esperet, but that he was under the orders of Allenby and was to take no further part in d'Esperet's campaign. Clemenceau of course climbed down, but told Lloyd George that he had insulted him. "Because," said Lloyd George, "that is the only way of doing business with you." Mr. Bonar Law came gently up with a view to pouring oil on the troubled waters and explaining how great friends everybody was with everybody else and how the last thing anybody wanted to do was to insult him. "Ah!" said Clemenceau impatiently, "he insults me and I love him. You flatter me and I loathe you."

"Well, well! I wonder whether it really happened!

"As to business, he told us that there would be no difficulty at all with the Conservatives about a very advanced social programme, Housing, Land, something far better than had ever been done before in this country, transportation, and so forth. That was all right.

"We then came to Tariffs, and he said his policy was Key Industries, Imperial Preference on existing or future taxes and anti-dumping, and he said it was all covered by the Paris Resolutions. Winston, Fisher and I here interposed that the Paris Resolutions went too far and that dumping was good for a country. We all said that we were quite prepared for the sake of the Coalition to sacrifice our principles for the Reconstruction period and as a temporary expedient, and that as a matter of fact it would never be necessary to apply them during that period. The Prime Minister agreed, but pointed out that we must make some sacrifices for the Coalition. I reminded him that we had one asset that the Conservatives have not got, namely, the Prime Minister, who belonged to us, and that they could not get on without him. He liked this and said that he had already told them that they could not poll one-third of the



people without him. This, mark you, was the second indication in the course of the evening, his remarks on social reform being the first, that he had already negotiated with the Conservatives, and as he continually read from documents prepared by Philip Kerr, I cannot help being confirmed in my opinion that the whole thing was arranged by him and Bonar Law with Kerr's assistance during their time in Paris. How could it be otherwise?

"He said at one moment rather sharply to Winston, but intending it for us all, that in the course of a few days he was entitled to know who were going on with him and who were not.

"We then went to Home Rule, on which he remarked that the only possible Home Rule was Home Rule excluding the six Counties. Fisher urged that he should do a Home Rule Bill on the lines of his letter to the Convention. No; he would not have it. In fact, he really does not want to modify anything in Kerr's notes. We did not get on to a League of Nations or conscription.

"Addison asked about War Pledges. He said they must be honoured, but he did not take that view at this morning's Cabinet so far as honouring them now was concerned.

"I then said that there was a small country called India about which I was bound to speak. Did he propose to go on with my policy? 'Yes, certainly', he said, 'there was only one man against it.' 'Well', I said, 'you must choose between my policy and the policy of Lord Sydenham.' He said he didn't mean Sydenham, there was only one man in the Government against it. 'Yes', I said, 'but is that one man in the Government going to be coerced?' 'Certainly', he replied. 'Then he does not share Ulster's privilege of never being coerced', I said. 'No', said Lloyd George, with a laugh, 'I shall take pleasure in coercing him.'

"That is very satisfactory. I don't know how it will turn out.

"Finally it was agreed that a manifesto ought to be issued and Fisher was entrusted with the task of writing such a manifesto.

"I have seen Fisher this afternoon, and I found him very unhappy. He does not know whether the Prime Minister will push Home Rule through. He does not know how far the terms agreed last night will be modified after consultation with the Conservatives. Nor do I! One ought never to count on a bargain with this amazing man until it is concluded and one ought not to be certain until it has been concluded. After all, he thought he had squared the

doctors, and the doctors thought they had squared him. But it wasn't so. He thought he had settled the Home Rule Bill after the Irish rebellion, and the Ulstermen and the Irish thought they had agreed with him. But it wasn't so. His treatment even of the Paris Resolutions can be answered by Asquith on a Free Trade line if he wishes, and as Fisher pointed out this afternoon, what is a key industry? Is agriculture a key industry? Are Excess Profits to be continued?

"Fisher has asked me for my views as to the right policy, and my views are as follows. I merely throw them down as heads.

"(1) The carrying out of my policy in India. I would put this matter first. Others would not. Every man to his own dungheap, and I don't want India to be another Ireland.

"(2) A very far reaching social reform programme, including Housing, Land, Nationalisation of railways, Re-organisation of Government Departments, Revision of the system of Taxation, (? Capital Levy to pay the War Bill).

"(3) The maintenance of Free Trade, but the recognition that we live in exceptional times and that exceptional measures must be taken. The Government has started industries and has sunk money in industries vital to the Empire which must not be let down. The Government must not allow dumping by those neutrals or enemies who are ready to dump to capture markets whilst we are getting ready for peace. Therefore if it is proved to be necessary, key industries are entitled to protection, or, preferably, to bounties.

"(4) Some steps should be taken to ensure that the result of the expenditure of public money on bolstering key industries should not be unlimited profits to the shareholders in particular concerns. Query, can the Excess Profits Tax be maintained? If it were maintained only for those who got bounties as key industries, few key industries would want the bounties.

"(5) During the Reconstruction period anti-dumping machinery can be provided to be put into action against glaring examples of selling here articles manufactured abroad at a price below the price which it cost to manufacture them. There must be no new taxation of food. Emphasis must be laid upon the fact that these measures are temporary for the Reconstruction period and that every supporter of Coalition will be at liberty to say that he does not thereby depart from the fiscal creed which he feels will again be justified when normal conditions are restored.



“(6) Ireland shall have a Home Rule Bill, and that Home Rule Bill shall be the one that gives the largest amount of Self-government to Ireland consistent with the pledge given by Asquith’s Government that Ulster shall never be coerced.

“(I myself believe that Ulster ought to be coerced when Great Britain and the rest of Ireland think that she is safeguarded and is unreasonable in resisting. If you ask people to a bargain and assure one side that it will not be coerced, it is very difficult to secure your bargain).

“(7) Something ought to be said about the reduction of armaments and the League of Nations.

“This is all I can think of, and if it could be so arranged that the acceptance of such a policy as the above led to the discarding of a certain element of the Conservative Party, it would be all the easier for Liberals to remain in a Coalition which is not a Coalition so long as the Liberals are individuals and the Conservatives are an intact Party. I think it ought also to be made a condition of the existence of a Coalition that it should include a Labour element.

“Fisher told me this afternoon that having got his two Bills, such was his perplexity about the future that he thought he would not go on. I hope to Goodness he does not persist in this view. I think it is a cowardly and a selfish one, but it is very probably the one I shall adopt if I ever get my Indian Bill through.”

“Friday, 8 November

“Last night I saw Max Beaverbrook. He had got the Lloyd George programme at the end of his tongue and he described it as a complete victory for the Conservatives, the capture of Lloyd George and the abandonment of Free Trade.

“He seems to have seen Winston whom he describes as certain to accept anything. He thinks Winston is making a great mistake and it always pays to stick to one’s principles. He seems strangely anxious that Winston and I should leave. But, mark the significance, in a moment of indiscretion he disclosed to me the fact which all these notes show that I have long suspected, that a letter was written to Mr. Bonar Law by the Prime Minister in Paris embodying the terms and that he, Max, had seen the letter. It does not matter, it is a mere fleabite, it doesn’t alter the merits of the question, but every illustration of how we work is food for reflection and for amusement.”

## CHAPTER XIV

### *India at the Paris Peace Conference (1919)*

Aet. 40

THE YEAR 1919 was the year of the Paris Peace Conference. It was a year of triumph for Montagu in that the Government of India Bill was passed into law with little opposition and this enactment of a liberal measure by a Conservative Government was largely due to his pertinacity and patience; but it was also the year of the tragic riots in the Punjab and massacre by General Dyer at Amritsar.

The position of the Dominions on the Imperial War Cabinet and at the Peace Conference was the logical result of recognising them as self-governing Nations. It was less logical to extend the same treatment to India which was not self-governing, but governed from Whitehall. Montagu insisted that, as Delegate for India, he could express in public views independent of, and opposed to, those of the British Cabinet, despite the fact that he was himself a member of the British Cabinet and therefore shared responsibility for its views. This was his undoing.

A letter to Chelmsford of 10 January 1919 gives an interesting impression of the situation after the 1918 Election.

“10th January 1919

“(1) Let me send you a line on the eve of going to Paris tomorrow. The moment at which I write is exciting. The Election has resulted in a sweeping victory for Lloyd George, but has left not a very pleasant aftermath. There has never been, I think, so personal a victory. His speeches were reported at length, he conducted the campaign, his views were what the public wanted to know. On the other hand, there is ground for believing that the ground was not well chosen, that it is open to criticism that a victory was snatched at a psychological moment and the results may be misconstrued by some people into a verdict for re-action which it was not in the least.



"We are left with a very angry minority excluded from the new House, and we must be prepared for what the Labour Party call industrial methods.

"I mourn greatly the disappearance of my old political friends from the House of Commons. They had much ability, which can ill be spared, and a *modus vivendi* with them would have immeasurably strengthened the Government. Charles Roberts's disappearance is deplorable from the Indian point of view, while, from an Imperial and an International point of view, the imposing figure, the sterling reputation, the dispassionate judgment, the concise speech of Mr. Asquith is something that we can ill do without.

"I think everyone is frightened of the results and a little grave in the face of the new situation . . . .

"(2) I wonder what you will think of the appointment of Sinha.<sup>1</sup> I had no time to consult you, as I wired to you, but I am convinced that it will have very many beneficial results. It will be a fine thing for India and for our position vis-à-vis India in such countries as America to hear the Indian Government defended in Parliament by an Indian. It will be a fine thing for Lord Sydenham and all those who wish to indulge in racial obloquy to have to do it in the presence of an Indian, and it will give the best earnest it is possible to give of the reality of our intentions with regard to the future status of India.

"At the same time I had a little doubt as to Sinha having the necessary courage, but when I saw him yesterday morning and told him I had a startling question to ask him and could not give him five minutes to consider the matter, I thought I should have had entreaties, imploring requests to consult his friends. But he answered, with a few words of doubt as to his capacity, with a firm affirmative from which he has never receded, and when I told him that I had to give assurances that he had only one wife, he said with a smile that he had always found one wife enough.

"Immediately afterwards I had to break the news to Curzon. I wish I could repeat to you the incident.

<sup>1</sup> Chelmsford approved. He quoted Belloc's poem:

"Lord Uncle Tom was different from  
What other nobles are.  
For they are yellow or pink, I think,  
But he was black as tar."

“ ‘O, but Sinha is not a Peer’.

“ ‘Not yet’, I said.

“ ‘An hereditary Peerage for an Indian’?

“ ‘Yes’, I said.

“ ‘Has the King assented’?

“ ‘Yes’.

“ ‘Does Sinha know of this’?

“ ‘Yes’.

“ ‘Well, then it’s no good saying anything’?

“ ‘No’.

“I confess I don’t want to say anything. I am so shocked, so surprised, so staggered that I dare not trust myself to express an opinion. It may be a very good thing; I can at least see this, that you have taken a step for which I don’t blame you to increase your chances of getting your legislation through very materially.

“He then said he thought that as Leader of the House of Lords he ought to have been consulted, but he was very friendly; I liked his attitude, and I don’t think he is in the least alarmed . . . .

“(3) . . . The Prime Minister in offering me the post of Secretary of State for India not only agreed to include a promise of legislation in the King’s speech contingently upon the Reforms Committees having finished their work, but also said that the appointment of Sinha would make India understand the few months delay in action which was necessary. So I think we can say from the point of view of the Government that our chances are rosy, but one has yet to see what our chances are from the point of view of the Houses of Parliament.”

The next letter to Chelmsford gives a history of how India came to be treated in the same way as the Dominions in the Imperial War Cabinet and at the Peace Conference. “I wonder”, Montagu begins, “whether you ever have time to reflect upon the profound, irretraceable changes that have been made in the Constitution of the British Empire during the last few months.” First the Prime Minister invited the Prime Ministers of the Dominions to become members of the Imperial War Cabinet. (“Did you ever see so glaring an example of dyarchy?”) The Secretary of State for India was appointed a member of the Imperial War Cabinet and was given two



“adlati”, chosen by the Viceroy, to accompany him to its meetings (Sinha and Bikaner). When the Peace negotiations began, both the Viceroy’s nominees (so Montagu understood) became full members of the War Cabinet. The Dominion and Indian representatives were asked to accompany the Prime Minister to Paris, (“An attempt is made to invite only your nominees, but I claim that they cannot represent you without me and this claim is granted.”) These representatives form part of the British Empire Delegation, with the right to say what the five delegates chosen from the British Empire Delegation shall say at the Inter-Allied Conference. (“They are of course consulted only when the Prime Minister chooses to consult them.”) The Dominions obtained separate representation at the Inter-Allied Conference on matters which concern them, and Montagu plus the two Indians ranked as the Prime Minister of a Dominion. India was allowed two delegates—the same as Canada, S. Africa and Australia. The British Empire Delegation agreed on 21 January 1919 that the Dominions and India might, on matters of interest to them, put in memoranda to the Inter-Allied Conference separately from the British Imperial Delegates, though they took part in the deliberations which led to the decisions of those delegates.

“As regards India,” Montagu commented, “ ‘Ex-pro-consuls’ and others are holding up their hands with horror at any substantial efforts towards self-government, and at the same time we have gone—shall I say lightly?—into a series of decisions which put India so far as International affairs are concerned on a basis wholly inconsistent with the position of a subordinate country. Her status has soared far more rapidly than could have been accomplished by any of our reforms, and this trend is strengthened by the Prime Minister’s appointment to a parliamentary position of Lord Sinha . . . . Sinha and Bikaner are naturally revelling in the position and Sinha promises well. He is conducting himself with great dignity and showing a very dispassionate judgment.”

Montagu stayed in Paris from 11 January 1919 till the middle of February, when he visited London for the opening of Parliament. “The Peace Conference”, Montagu wrote to Chelmsford on 4 February 1919, “curiously steered, strangely conducted, is lurching

along to a satisfactory conclusion; while the Labour questions at home are very, very menacing. We are, it seems to me, in for troubles of dimensions and difficulties that no one can foretell." As regards the Reforms, he reported that "Curtis<sup>2</sup> is conducting an uncompromising campaign in favour of undiluted diarchy. Oh these men who live above the clouds on the mountain tops, confident in the sordid imperfections of their fellow men and rightly convinced of the integrity of their own soul."

On 14 February 1919 (when Montagu was in London for a few days) he pressed Curzon, who was in charge of the Foreign Office while Balfour was in Paris, to sit on the Cabinet Committee to draft the Indian Reforms Bill.

"I have often told you," Montagu wrote, "that my one ambition is to get an Indian Reform Bill through both Houses without delay. My next ambition is that this Reform Bill should be such as to receive the whole-hearted support of every member of the present Government. I need hardly say that the sympathy and assistance which you have given me since we have been colleagues and your great authority on Indian affairs lead me to attach special importance to your advice and help in framing the measure, and I shall be deeply disappointed if the work you are doing at the Foreign Office prevents it."

Curzon sent his "sincere thanks for the language in which you couch your appeal", but declined on account of pressure of work. This refusal made Montagu very unhappy, for he felt that Curzon could be a most damaging enemy and that it was essential to secure his support.

"I do not really know," Montagu wrote, "if you will forgive me for saying so, how we are to proceed . . . . Would you be willing to come to a meeting of the Cabinet Committee in due course and tell your colleagues on that Committee what it is you cannot accept and perhaps (we should all be profoundly grateful if you could do this) also make some constructive proposal? . . . Your share in the drafting of the announcement makes it imperative that you should

<sup>2</sup> Lionel Curtis, C. H. (1872-1958). Served with Milner in South Africa in framing the Union; authority on British Commonwealth Relations.



have a share in carrying it out. You can throw over, if you wish, everything that I have written or said. Even if an alternative way of carrying out the announcement meant my resignation from the Government, rather than that it should not be carried out, I would gladly assent to it."

It seemed intolerable to Montagu that Curzon would neither give his full support to the Reforms Scheme nor reveal in what points he disagreed. Curzon would only say: "I distrust your Scheme in certain respects because I think it is going to upset Local Governments terribly and to depreciate the Civil Service and lower the standards of administration. But if you ask me 'What I want done', I could not tell you without a fortnight or three weeks study and consultation. This is simply out of the question for me now." Montagu replied that he was "eagerly desirous" to discuss how the upset to Local Governments could be minimised and that some loss of the political power of the Civil Service and loss of efficiency in administration was inevitable.

Montagu was back in Paris by 18 February 1919. From there he wrote to Chelmsford:

"18 February 1919

"You may perhaps have seen in the papers that I am dealing with Finance for the Peace Conference. This is irritating and detestable. There never was anything more fraudulent in all public reputations than the reputation which is the only one ever given me, for financial ability. I was designated for the Treasury at an early stage of my political life because there is a public opinion which I cannot correct and which haunts me still, that I was once in the City. On that pretence I obtained as it were a forged passport into the conclaves of City men, and when in the Treasury I behaved as all Financial Secretaries to the Treasury do, desperately clutching at the economic advice given me by Civil Servants and spending my time in saying 'You must not' to angry Government Departments who wanted sixpence to spend.

"I know nothing of political economy, not even so much as I know of music. International Finance bores me as much as it frightens me. I spend my time in Paris committing myself to nothing until a Treasury official tells me what I am to say, and trying

hard to invent excuses for getting somebody to take my work.

“... I felt that as India was a nation for separate representation at the Peace Conference, it had got to be a separate nation in the League of Nations. I had to come to London for the Opening of Parliament, leaving the representation of India at the Conference to Bikaner. He has covered himself with glory, gained the point, even bearding and obtaining the necessary answer from the great President Wilson himself! I am afraid there will be no holding him when he gets back to India! He appears to have finished his triumph by inviting Clemenceau to go and shoot tigers with him. That amazing septuagenarian has that one ambition, and you may find him in your jungles next cold weather. The whole proceeding appears to have concluded by Bikaner displaying to the big five the tiger tattooed on his arm, which was inspected and approved not only by Clemenceau, but by Orlando and Wilson. Thus we make peace with Germany.”

Montagu, with his fundamentally liberal and constructive outlook was always wondering whether anything could be done to convert “extremists” to moderate views. He wrote an interesting letter on this to Lord Ronaldshay on 4 March 1919.

“I long to talk to you and am loath to write to you, letter-writing is to me the acme of abomination. Thoughts and topics whirl through my brain while I sit down to write or dictate, but long before the dictation is complete I am so bored with the slowness of the process compared with the flow of the thoughts that I give it up as a bad job.

“... My whole aim in life is to work with the moderates and to regard the extremists as the opposition. But I want to form a Government Party, Indian, courageous and strong, and if men, undoubtedly able, have helped the Government by such service as exposing the fallaciousness of Mrs. Besant’s charges or by collaborating with Rowlatt to deal with sedition, are not given opportunities of serving the Government, I do not think we shall achieve this object.

“... I am constantly worried by the possibility of reforming the extremists. By the extremist, I mean, in this connection, rather the boy who is a party to the murder of a policeman, or even to worse



things, more clearly than I mean the elderly, violent, phrase-making caste-worshipping politician. So often does it seem to me that these boys are really very fine stuff, horribly, wilfully misled into poisonous crime. They read of the dawn of revolution in Italy. They believe that they are called upon to make Government impossible, and then follow, at early ages, long terms of imprisonment, and the end of all hope. And yet what can we do? For we cannot condone crime. We must protect life. We are therefore on the horns of a dilemma on which I should like you to ponder.

“I hear well-informed people in India telling me that it is essential to make a pronouncement of policy; that it is essential to let Indians be convinced of our earnestness in our desire to fit them for self-government, in proving to them that our Empire is not founded on race subjection, and when we do it, is it to have no conversion result on those to whom it has been said? The thought is in my mind because I have just been reading a letter from a boy in the Andamans, a letter which shows wide reading and cultivation, and a yearning to return to his home to serve his country. He says that, ‘if the Government want India to be self-governing, the young men of India can work with the Government.’ Now I admit that this sort of thing must be an exception, but does it not suggest the continual searching of the mind and the real attitude of at least the immature who have committed crimes? I know that you have done much and are doing much in the release of internees; but the solution of the conflicting and perplexing suggestions arising out of the study of the psychology of political crime in India calls for constant thought and the highest statesmanship.”

A letter to Chelmsford reveals some feeling of irritation on Chelmsford's part:

“Paris, 4 March 1919

“I cannot but think that special representation for India becomes a fraud if we are not allowed to voice Indian feeling about Turkey although it differs from that of the Home Government. The Home Government sees difficulty in this. I do not much mind if I am ultimately debarred, but then it seems to me that I am in honour bound to take home the Indian Delegation. However we shall see how all this works out. . . .

“I wish that you realised that the India Office always does all it can and that it regards itself, even when it differs from your Government, as part of the same machine with the duty of presenting a united front, so far as possible, to the world. I am still much worried by the antagonism which exists between your Government and my Office. It is only comparable to the antagonism which seems to exist between the Local Governments and your Government. The secret is to be found, I feel sure, in centralisation and subordination. If we could cure this there might be more co-operation between the different parts of the machine.

“I quite sympathise with your desire to reduce by one third or more the enquiries of the present Secretary of State.<sup>3</sup> He is doubtless a most damnable nuisance, violent in his language, urgent in his requests, irritating in his methods, so much so that I suspect it is somewhat difficult to recognise his indubitable sympathy and appreciation. One of the things that makes your task so difficult is that you are at the mercy of the peculiarities and personalities of Secretaries of State. They have got to be taken as they come, made the best of, humoured, borne with, but after all, they come and go—sometimes quite suddenly when it is least expected. If I were a Viceroy and could choose my own Secretary of State, I think I should choose somebody very like Chamberlain with perhaps a little more fight, but I have always envied him his patience, his understanding, his reserve.”

The theme of converting the Extremists is further developed in a long letter of 8 March 1919 to Chelmsford:

“I want to write you a letter whilst it is hot in my mind on a subject which I think is one of extraordinary difficulty—a subject about which I have no very clear ideas myself. Nevertheless I feel that it is one demanding urgent attention and I would implore your consideration of it and the benefit of any advice you may be able to give.

“I want to direct your attention to revolutionary crime in India.

“One of the great arguments that was adduced for the pro-

<sup>3</sup> In apologising for delays Chelmsford had explained that Montagu's queries were three times in number those of Chamberlain, and that (while Chelmsford made no complaint of this) they took time to deal with.



nouncement of the 20th August [1917] was that it was desirable to show the world and India our intentions in India and our determination to leave no stone unturned to fit it for self-government and to frame our policy in that direction. It was confidently expected that the political situation would improve as the result of that pronouncement and the steps taken to carry it out. Has it in effect? Is it not likely, is it not possible that people who were revolutionaries before the activities were started in August year may now be on our side?

“But the trouble is that revolutionaries are in prison or deported and that makes the exploration of this subject all the more difficult.

“Now I think I remember a conversation with you on this subject in Delhi. We are apt to talk about Extremists in India as if they were all one and the same kind of person. There seems to me two well marked kinds of Extremists. There are the Extremists among the Congress-Wallah of no particular political wisdom or training or knowledge, using catch words and phrases rather than thought and disguising under a pretended desire for progress and reform real conservatism battenning on race hatred and prejudice. He as a rule steers clear of crime, but loves caste. He enjoys agitation, wishes for no particular alteration in social usage and custom and is content merely to inscribe phrases upon his banner and demand with vituperation and slander their achievement in the political institutions in India. The other kind of Extremist is a real social reformer, desirous of a genuine self-governing India, believing in a sort of exaggerated doctrine on individual liberty, anxious to elevate the Depressed Classes, to do social service, and often of wide education, a real intellectual. These latter are the revolutionaries, or at any rate, among them are the revolutionaries. . . . They have on the face of it nothing to do with Congress. They have read political books, the history of revolution in other countries, and without any real criminal instincts, resort to crime as martyrs would for revolutionary purposes. They are often fine young boys, and it would seem to me that their youth should be taken into account and that genuine attempts at political reform would produce from them conversion, repentance and cooperation. (They at least would really understand the difference between a really progressive scheme like ours and the ‘Concessions’ of the Satraps or Congress.) If this were achieved,

how much stronger our position would be! How ridiculous the Extremists of the Congress would appear!

“Now is any effort being made in this direction? Revolutionary crime exists; Rowlatt legislation becomes inevitable. To you as to me the extra-legal processes which you were forced to suggest to the Legislative Council must have been very distasteful. The necessity for them arises from the existence of the crimes. But are we not moving in a vicious circle? Are we doing enough to prevent the existence of the crime? There is nothing so easy at any particular moment as to govern through the police. It is far simpler than any other method. It requires less thought, less circumlocution. Take every man on his police record, use intercepted correspondence and exceptional powers, and you have an easy time. But you sow the whirlwind for your successor to reap, and you bring down the Government in God’s own time as certainly as it was brought down in Russia. That is why I have always thought that O’Dwyer’s success in the Punjab so cheap a success. . . .

“Now where does all this lead to? It leads to my mind to the necessity for fostering conversion and looking for the effect of what we are doing. I am continually getting messages of conversion. . . . I am thinking in the main of the young boy, fresh from the University, who has committed crimes of a revolutionary character from misguided political motives and who is undergoing an indefinite sentence of internment or a long period in the Andamans. Can you do anything for these boys? Is their situation not explorable?

“Of course I know tired and overworked officials who have got malefactors under lock and key naturally say to themselves: ‘Oh don’t let’s have to start all over again. Let us take no risks’.

“But on the other hand supposing one single boy convinces his friends and relatives in his correspondence that he has altered his mind, that he is now on the side of the Government, and the Government refuses to consider the case, do you not add new recruits, younger brothers to the revolutionary party, and therefore are you not increasing the risk instead of averting it?

“I have obtained accounts of the Andamans which really fill me with horror. You may be able to assure me that they are not true, but they are very circumstantial and very terrible.

“Is there no genuine Borstal treatment possible for the boys?



Could not their time in internment or in prison be used to teach them the error of their ways by trusted Indian or English missionaries who could explain to them, not that what they want is wrong, but that their method is reprehensible?

“ . . . Are there no prison visitors in India? Could there not be prison visitors in India to whom the prisoners could make complaints of ill treatment of unnecessarily harsh and wounding brutality from prison warders or prison Governors? Is not the prison visitor system a good one?

“I would beg of you to do what I think I asked you to do last year when I was in Delhi, and that is to see Bijay Chatterjee of Bengal. Here is a man who knows these boys well. He was in his younger days a revolutionary. He has escaped prison, he has become a Moderate, and his speeches that I have seen on Reforms show how courageously and successfully he has fought men of the stamp of C. R. Das and Bepin Chandra Pal. See him and talk to him. He believes implicitly that he could give security for many an Andaman boy, many an interned Bengalee, if he were given a chance. Ronaldshay, or rather Ronaldshay's Government, apparently does not agree with him. But I cannot help feeling convinced in my own mind that there is much in what he says and that we should be taking a grave responsibility if we dismissed without full exploration what he has so much at heart. Let him talk to you about interneers, amnesties, investigations, and see what you make of him. . . .

“If you will not think me so intolerable as to be quite intolerable, this leads me to restart old hares. The real reason why you have to resort so often in India to extra-legal processes is that your legal system is so bad. I cannot help thinking, although I hate to suggest more enquiries than are absolutely necessary, that you should use the three years of your Rowlatt legislation to see if you cannot obtain something more speedy, something simpler, something cheaper, which may go a long way to replace the special tribunals and executive action which you find so necessary at the moment.

“And then again I shall never be satisfied myself until some investigation is made of the methods and powers and the use of the powers of the C. I. D. The statements that I have heard ever since I have been connected with India about shadowing of innocent people, about records, about the whole activities of the Depart-

ment and about the use made of it by the Government, make me think that an impartial investigation of its activities now that the war is over is very much and urgently called for. . . .”

On 10 March 1919 the Big Four in Paris set up a Committee of Experts to report how much Germany should be made to pay as Reparation. The team was Montagu for the U. K., Norman Davis for the U. S. A. and Loucheur for France. The British Treasury had proposed £2,000 million, Montagu and Davis agreed with this figure. But for “political” reasons the “Experts” on 15 March 1919 recommended £3,000 million with another £3,000 million to be paid in German currency and only converted when conditions should so permit.

Thus Montagu had secured the best possible compromise between sense and politics, but meanwhile Hughes (of Australia), Cunliffe (Governor of the Bank of England) and Sumner (a Law Lord) proposed £11,000 million and Lloyd George completely threw over Montagu and put forward the lunatic figure advocated by Cunliffe etc. as the official British Proposal. (This is narrated by P. M. Burnett in his *Reparation at the Peace Conference*, vol. 1, p. 54 and Sir Roy Harrod in his *Life of Keynes*, pp. 241-42.)

Montagu was most indignant at the way in which Lloyd George treated him.

Montagu wrote to Chelmsford on 31 March 1919:

“I write to you at an exciting moment. I am still tied by the leg to Paris, deeper immersed than ever in the affairs of the Peace Conference. So far every effort I have made to be released in order to attend to reforms have failed and I spend my days in aiding the desperate efforts we are making to get the preliminary Treaty with Germany ready for signature—and then will Germany sign? I imagine that to make peace at any moment is a difficult matter To make Peace when the whole world is interested in the decision and when revolution is an even more menacing enemy than the exhausted forces of the enemies of the country—it seems to be almost superhuman. However the Prime Minister is undaunted, and I suppose we are making progress, although the future is very obscure.”

On 7 April 1919 Montagu returned to London, leaving the Inter-



Allied Financial Commission to Keynes. He explained to Austen Chamberlain, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, "I ought to get on with the preparation of an Indian Reforms Bill, the passage of which is the main, if not the only, *raison d'être* for my existence in the Government."

## CHAPTER XV

### *Amritsar and More Peace Conference (1919)*

ON 13 APRIL 1919, there occurred the massacre at Amritsar which had effects in increasing race hatred that have lasted to the present day, forty years later. In April 1919 there were widespread riots and disorders in Delhi, Bombay and the Punjab. At Amritsar the Punjab Government deported two of the chief local agitators at 10 a.m. on 10 April 1919. At about 11.30 the news of the deportation was spreading in the city. A large, excited and angry crowd tried to force its way across a railway bridge into the civil lines to threaten the Deputy Commissioner. A picket of two British and two Indians under a Lieutenant were trotting back at a fast pace and being badly stoned by stones for road-metalling when an Assistant Commissioner told the Lieutenant that he must fire. Three or four individuals were killed or wounded and the crowd was halted. About 1 p.m. some local lawyers came forward and said they would take the crowd away from the Bridges, which they did. But a large and angry crowd reformed and tried to rush the road bridge, at the same time stoning the defenders. The crowd was fired upon and between twenty and thirty casualties ensued. The crowd then attacked and wrecked the Telephone Exchange: they attacked the Telegraph Office and seized the Telegraph Master, but were beaten off by firing eighteen rounds. The goods yard was wrecked and a guard brutally beaten to death.

Meantime in the City a Sergeant was murdered and Miss Sherwood, a lady missionary, was knocked down by blows on the head and beaten while on the ground: when she got up to run, she was knocked down again more than once; in the end she was left on the street because she was thought to be dead. She was afterwards picked up by some Hindus and her life was saved. Many buildings were burned down and looted and telegraph wires were cut.

On 11 April 1919, those killed—about ten—were buried without



further rioting, and Brigadier General R.E.H. Dyer, C.B., arrived to take charge of the military. On 12 April troops were marched about the City and arrests were made: the bearing of the inhabitants was said to be most insolent. General Dyer considered firing on the crowd, but decided to issue a warning proclamation first. On the morning of 13 April General Dyer went through the city, summoned people to various places by beat of drum and had a proclamation read out to them imposing an 8 p.m. curfew and forbidding processions or gatherings which would be dispersed by force of arms. At the same time the agitators issued a counter proclamation that a meeting would be held in an open space called the Jallianwala Bagh at 4.30 p.m. The Jallianwala Bagh was a rectangular piece of unused ground covered to some extent by building material and débris, and almost surrounded by the walls of buildings. The entrances to it were few and imperfect.

About 4 p.m. General Dyer marched fifty troops to the Jallianwala Bagh. A large crowd (10,000 to 20,000) had gathered at the opposite end and were being addressed. The General had, as soon as he heard of the meeting, made up his mind to go there and open fire. He had intended to fire with machine guns, but he was unable to take them through the narrow entrance. He put his fifty Indian soldiers on raised ground at the entrance and without giving any warning or asking the people to disperse, immediately opened fire at the people in the meeting who were at a distance of 100 to 150 yards. The people as soon as the first shots were fired, began to run away through the few exits. The General continued firing till the ammunition ran short. 1650 rounds were fired and at least 379 were killed and about 1200 wounded.

General Dyer explained in his Report that it was no longer a question of merely dispersing the crowd, but one of producing a sufficient moral effect, from a military point of view, not only on those who were present, but more especially throughout the Punjab. There could be no question of undue severity. He told the Commission of Enquiry that if he had been able to use the machine guns, he would probably have used them and increased the number of casualties. "If they disobeyed my orders," the General said, "it showed there was a complete defiance of the law. They had come to fight if they defied me, and I was going

to give them a lesson. . . . I was going to punish them. My idea from the military point of view, was to make a wide impression.’’

It is an astonishing fact that General Dyer’s conduct received the approval of his military superior and of the Lieutenant Governor, Sir Michael O’Dwyer.

Equally horrifying to the liberal mind were the harsh, humiliating and unjust punishments imposed under Martial Law. One example, General Dyer’s ‘‘crawling order’’, must suffice. The street where Miss Sherwood was attacked was a long and narrow one. The order was to the effect that no Indians should be allowed to pass through the street, but if they wanted to pass they must go on all fours, and this was enforced from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. In this curious context the General expressed his gratitude to Providence.

‘‘I never imagined any sane man would voluntarily go through under these conditions and I was still searching for some fitting punishment when Providence stepped in. I gave orders for 11 insolent inhabitants to be handed over to the police. I did not know that the police had been left at the far end of the street in which the pickets [enforcing the crawling order] were posted. Arrived at the near end of the street, the prisoners were confronted by the non-commissioned officer in command of the picket and made to crawl between the two pickets, a distance of about 150 yards.’’

This crawling order was disapproved of by O’Dwyer and revoked.

Montagu’s first reaction to the news of these deplorable events was sympathy with Chelmsford: his next anxiety was ‘‘to show as soon and as emphatically as I can that we do not want to find in these distressing occurrences a cause for any retreat from the pledges we have given or the proposals we have made. I cannot help thinking’’, he wrote to Sir George Lloyd, ‘‘that what the asses call strong government is very largely responsible for what has occurred. Sitting on the barometer, stifling discussion, interfering with the free movement of people, eases the situation at the moment, but brings its reward.’’

In the same sense he wrote to Chelmsford on 1 May 1919, in a letter full of self-criticism and melancholy:

‘‘I am shortly going to telegraph to you suggesting that it



will be necessary to have an enquiry into the causes of and the treatment of the riots that have occurred in India. . . . The more I read of these occurrences, the more I am struck by the fact that there is every reason to believe that they are the inevitable consequences of that easiest of all forms of government, firm strong government. . . .

“You and I have often discussed together my shortcomings as a Secretary of State. One of them which caused me most anxiety because it is a shortcoming that nothing can now remove, is the fact that I have not achieved the confidence of the public, and in particular, the British in India. In fact, the only confidence that I have achieved is the wavering, flickering, fluctuating support of some Indians. But even this to an incomparably smaller extent than Lord Hardinge achieved it. Of course, the most that I could expect from the English population in India was a belief that wrong-headedly, dangerously, I was doing my best. That although my policy was wrong, after all it had to be submitted to and that it was being cleanly, vigorously and ably pursued. But the longer, I remain in Office, the more scrupulous I try to be in respecting the views of my political opponents, the more currency seems to be given to a reputation for double-dealing, falsification of records, untrustworthiness. This is not any the more pleasant because I am confident of its baselessness. Public men get a reputation well-founded, more often than not, which no act of theirs can remedy. That shy, sloppy sentimentalist, Mr. Asquith, as full of affectionate impulse as a potato is of starch, had a public reputation for cold austere aloofness. For many years there was in England a belief that Edward Grey could do no wrong and it was almost indecent to criticise him.

“I don’t know whether you remember the preface to *John Bull’s Other Island* where Bernard Shaw protests that the general view of Englishmen as cold and collected and of Irishmen as warm-hearted, quixotic and hysterical is wholly false, and when he cites the Duke of Wellington as a typical Irishman and Lord Nelson as a typical Englishman. Perhaps people judge nations as they judge individuals, on prejudice. And perhaps after all they are better judges of individuals than the individuals concerned of themselves. And that is enough to make me melancholy, for as I see myself portrayed in public discussion at home and in India, I find myself

not only unamiable but disreputable. Never mind, I still hope that by the end of this year our Bill will be through and that by next spring I shall be watching the birds nesting and the spring flowers budding with all the mixed feelings of a man who has done his work, ill or well or both."

By 20 May 1919, Montagu was once more in Paris to represent the case of the Indian Mohammedans on the settlement with Turkey. "Last Saturday", he reports to Ronaldshay, "Bikaner, Sinha and I waited on the Great Four and were accompanied by the Aga Khan, Aftab Ahmed Khan of my Council [the Secretary of State's Council] and Yusuf Ali. Sinha did extremely well and I find his colleagueship of increasing value. What the result of our audience will be, no one can say, but I hope the Indian Moslems will anyhow believe that the Indian Delegation have done the best for them." Then Montagu returned to London for the Debate on the Indian Budget in the House of Commons. On this he reported to Chelmsford:

"28th May 1919

"We have had the Budget debate on May 22nd 1919. . . . I should not have got off so lightly had it not been for the very vague promises of enquiry which I made. That saved the situation, as heaps of fellow members told me afterwards. The time is coming when you will have to submit your proposals as to this enquiry. . . it must be a very influential body, limited in numbers, and its terms of reference must be so devised that it will not explore over again things that have been explored by other tribunals. But I am sure you will agree with me that it must be relentless in coming to the truth.

"As I told you yesterday, I was rejoiced at the action you took about public flogging. If that sort of thing is condemned by the Commission, action must follow, and if the Commission decides that there have been events in the Punjab in the past or at the moment that justify the view that O'Dwyerism is not suited even to that Province, it will accord with my view that this method of government always brings sooner or later its reward. . . .

"You will have gathered that events are now moving with lightning speed with regard to Reforms. In the debate our opponents hardly showed their heads. I am a little puzzled by their silence.



Dear old Colonel Yate<sup>1</sup> woollied a bit, rather incoherently, but whether the opposition is suddenly going to appear in all its force when the Bill is introduced, whether they hope to kill it in Joint Committee, throw it out in the Lords, or accept it, I don't know. As at present intended, the Bill will be published tomorrow and read a second time next week. . . .

"I hope you will not mind if on the details of the Bill certain differences appear between you and me. The fact of the matter is that, as you have said, you take a conservative view of the Reforms proposals. I don't. If the Houses of Parliament agree with you, the ultimate source of all power will have decided against me and I shall not complain. If they decide with me, I hope you will understand that it means that the world has moved further even than we thought.

"Meanwhile Lord Crewe's Committee is not going to help us much because it has become so alarmingly radical. Ye Gods, what a world we live in! Think of it—Lord Crewe, patient, courteous, essentially conservative, always seeing with equal clearness every side of every question—Lord Esher,<sup>2</sup> boon companion of King Edward—Professor Keith,<sup>3</sup> an eminent theoretical professor of the study—Mr. Basu (who has been constantly explaining to the Crewe Committee how wicked it is for the Secretary of State to interfere with the Government of India, and coming down to the Council Chamber to urge on almost every item of the agenda that I should over-rule you). This body, aided by the Aga Khan, a Civil Servant and a young Conservative Member of Parliament, will not be content without the abolition of the Council! What will the House of Lords say? Have they succeeded in wrecking our Bill? I wonder. One thing that is coming out of their proposals with which I myself cordially agree (in fact I am not sure that I did not suggest it to them) is this: That when you are in accord with your Legislative Assembly, you should not have to apply for my sanction and that you should have nothing to fear but His Majesty's

<sup>1</sup> Colonel Yate (1849-1940), C.S.I., C.M.G. Indian Administrator and subsequently M.P. He was seventy in 1919 and lived to be ninety-one.

<sup>2</sup> Viscount Esher (1852-1930), G.C.V.O., G.C.B. Refused Indian Viceroyalty in 1908. Acted as liaison between King George V and his Ministers.

<sup>3</sup> Professor Arthur Berriedale Keith (1879-1944). Sanskrit scholar and constitutional lawyer.

veto in Council. This is very far-reaching and means among other things fiscal autonomy for India.”

Meanwhile Montagu's concern at the Turkish Peace terms continued. “The ineffable delays”, he wrote on 25 May 1919, “the flopping about, the changes in the Turkish peace cause me despair. I am going back, I think, to Paris on Saturday [May 31st] to discuss the matter once more and see what I can do.” This topic is dealt with in Chapter XVII.

Montagu spent four interesting days, 31 May to 3 June, in Paris and dictated a note the day after his return to London.

“Dictated Wednesday, 4 June, 1919

“I was summoned to Paris with the other Ministers to consider Peace terms with Germany and to confer about Turkey.

“I travelled out with Chamberlain and Fisher, reading as hastily as I could on the journey the German reply of which Chamberlain handed me the first copy I had seen. We were all in agreement that the Germans had made out a case requiring considerable modification of the Treaty.

“We dined that night with the Prime Minister,—that is to say the British representatives. Bonar Law, Walter Long<sup>4</sup> [Colonial Secretary] and Curzon were not able to come, but Birkenhead, Churchill and Milner were there. The whole drift of the conversation was unanimous, Winston being the ring-leader. Though the drift was unanimous, Birkenhead put out a considerable plea for sternness, I think to make the devil's case. A point which Fisher made so well was that the German counter proposals were in themselves the most brilliant treaty that victors had ever imposed upon conquered, that if we went home with no peace although we could have achieved this peace, we should have risked all to gain nothing.

“The next morning I breakfasted with the Prime Minister, Winston and F.E. [Lord Birkenhead]. The Prime Minister was very much impressed with the discussion.

“At 11 o'clock the British Empire Delegates met in the Prime Minister's dining room. Here General Smuts violently denounced

<sup>4</sup> Walter Long (1854-1924). Viscount Long of Wraxall. President of Ministry of Agriculture, 1895-1900; and of Local Government Board, 1900-1905; Chief Secretary for Ireland, 1905; Local Government Board, 1915; Secretary of State for the Colonies, 1916-18; First Lord of the Admiralty, 1918-21.



the Treaty, was opposed with all his honourable wooden-headedness by Massey, who at the end, however, said that he would give up a good deal to get a signature. Winston followed, explaining how little difference there was between Smuts and Massey. Hughes behaved very well. The strangeness about the proceeding, which was the best discussion I ever remember between so large a body, was the unanimity. F.E. having spent most of the night talking to Winston, the latter joined the great majority. Sir George Foster, [1847-1931, Canadian Minister of Trade], a silent creature, broke his long silence for the first time and made a most impressive oration.

“We lunched with Arthur Balfour, where the conversation was amazing and Arthur Balfour, as usual, charming, tired and wholly useless. Fisher gave a brilliant exposition of the impossibility of restoring an original Poland. Arthur Balfour roused himself and suggested the same arguments might have applied against the unification of Italy. We demanded that this should be reasoned; he did it elaborately. Bob Cecil wound up by saying: ‘Is that all Arthur? Then it’s all nonsense.’ Winston by way of reproof said that he had not treated respectfully Arthur Balfour’s eloquent and historical narrative which showed that Paderewski was another Garibaldi and Noske the modern equivalent of Cavour.

“We met again at 5.30, when Arthur Balfour was put up to answer everything we had said in the morning. It was a valiant but futile effort which shocked some of his hearers. For instance, he suggested that the indemnity would only fall on those people who made goods for export. The German who exported boots, the price earned for which was to go in indemnity, would suffer, but the German railway worker would not feel the indemnity at all. What on earth he meant, where he learnt his economics, I haven’t the foggiest notion. But he was greeted with a howl of derision, even from Hughes. Finally the Prime Minister said he wished for our authority to tell Clemenceau that if the original proposals for an Army of Occupation for Silesia and for the indemnity stood, the British Army and Navy were not at the service of France. We all agreed that his solution of Silesia and the Army of Occupation was all right. When, however, it came to the indemnity, he put forward, on the spur of the moment, I think, the most amazing proposal that the Germans should undertake to do all the

restoration and to pay three thousand millions as well. Imagine the effect on French workmen of seeing German workmen in France occupied in rebuilding the houses!

“Monday morning I breakfasted with the Prime Minister and there found Baruch.<sup>5</sup> The Prime Minister put to Baruch his alternative proposal for indemnity. Baruch plainly told him it was no damn good. Then the Prime Minister turned to me and said that he thought that Loucheur, Baruch and I should have a conversation about the indemnity. I said that I had tried that before and counter-proposed that Baruch and Loucheur should talk. When Baruch had gone the Prime Minister asked me what on earth I meant by leaving it to an American and a Frenchman, that he must bring me there to protect British interests. I looked him very straightly between the eyes and said: ‘Prime Minister, I am sure you don’t want me to explain to you again why nothing will induce me to renew the services which I had once tried to render you in this direction.’<sup>6</sup> He said no more, but expressed a hope that I would come to the Austrian Peace Terms and that then we would fix up a lunch elsewhere.

“I went to the Austrian Peace Terms, a show that was interesting but not important and seemed to me to be treated by the Austrians as a joke, that is to say as though they were thinking, we have been a joke, it is very amusing to see what you are going to do with us now,—and after all there is nothing hard in breaking up an Empire of that kind. I was not surprised to receive no renewed invitation to lunch and I spent the afternoon in considering the India Bill.

“To my surprise I was bidden to breakfast on Tuesday morning. The Prime Minister was alone and seemed to have forgotten the dramatic little incident of yesterday morning. I told him again that the only possible way of solving the indemnity question was to fix a sum to be paid by Germany by handing over bonds to that value to the Allies, and that we should have an agreement with the Allies as to the division of that sum. My own view was five thousand millions from Germany, of which two thousand five hundred should go to France, one thousand five hundred to us and a

<sup>5</sup> Bernard M. Baruch (1870- ). American statesman and authority on Finance. Friend of Sir Winston Churchill.

<sup>6</sup> See the story of 10-17 March 1919 on page 203 above.



thousand to the others. I then urged that if these things were accomplished our experts should discuss with the German experts the methods and details. I don't think I had the slightest effect and he has asked me to go back on Friday."

On 5 June 1919, two days after his return from Paris Montagu spoke in the House of Commons on the second reading of the Government of India Bill. It was a long speech, carefully argued, mostly quiet and non-provocative. He reserved his invective for the scheme of the Indo-British Association. "The scheme is a scheme of bureaucrats, for the consumption of bureaucrats, intended for the enthronement of bureaucracy. In other words the Lord Sydenhams of the future can remain upon their throne, untrammelled by control from above and undismayed by criticisms from below." "I implore this House", he concluded, "to show to India to-day that Parliament is receptive of the case for self-government and only seeks an opportunity for completing it by the demonstrable realisation of the success of its stages."

Montagu recognised that, both in the Cabinet and in the House, there had been one overwhelmingly controversial point—diarchy. He himself did not like it and felt it could only be justified as temporary, but he saw no alternative.

Montagu reported to George Lloyd on 11 June 1919. "The debate on the Second Reading of the Bill was a long one, but its extension after about 11 o'clock was due to the efforts of Page Croft and a few other die-hards to adopt an obstructive attitude and secure the adjournment of the debate over the Recess." To Chelmsford on the same date he wrote:

"As regards the Reform Debate there is nothing to say. I have telegraphed to you the upshot. Except for the belated attempt at midnight to obstruct, brought about by Page Croft with the assistance of people recruited from a dinner, there was really no opposition, and so far as the House of Commons is concerned the Bill would be uncontroversial if it were not for diarchy. The House of Commons revealed itself as not a strong body for dealing with Indian problems, and as the House of Lords contingent will therefore be much the stronger on the Reforms Committee, we may find that portions of the Bill which you and I value will disappear.

“Curzon is doing his best to help a measure that he dislikes and which he does not ever discuss with me. We shall have Brodrick on the Committee, [St. John Brodrick, Lord Middleton] who is by no means an uncompromising opponent, and we shall have, I think, Joynson-Hicks,<sup>7</sup> who is amusingly torn between a desire to oppose and a desire to get a friendly welcome in India next winter. I wonder which will be the stronger force!

“...It became necessary to nominate the signatories of the German peace in the preamble to the draft treaty, and a dispute arose as to whether Bikaner's name should precede that of Sinha. Sir Charles Bailey hit upon the brilliant idea that it should be solved by the King Emperor himself, and he was consulted over the telephone. Pros and cons were put to him. He expressed himself emphatically of opinion that Bikaner's name should come first. He added to my astonishment that he was surprised to learn that Bikaner was not a British subject!...

“The German peace still hangs in the melting pot. As a matter of fact, the German counter proposals are so brilliant a peace in themselves that statesmanship seems to be much perplexed as to whether we must risk all in order to insist on much more. Those best qualified to judge stigmatize the peace as a French peace. This is curious to me psychologically. George dominated the Peace Conference on argument and seems to have been beaten by the French in achievement, while Wilson never seems to have fought any of his points to the end.”

The German treaty was to be signed on 28 June 1919, and Montagu was now longing to get away from Paris. “Here I am”, he wrote to Chelmsford on 25 June, “moaning, sighing, cursing in Paris. It is a vile, cold day with drizzling rain and a feeling of gloom, outside, inside and everywhere.” The same day Montagu wrote to George Lloyd:

“I want to get back to my Bill. I am not going to have an easy time. My Committee is going to contain Selborne, Middleton and Harris. Selborne, of course, is an honest fellow, as honest as daylight, but very stupid; and dear old St. John is more steeped in prejudices than a sardine in oil, whilst the idea of leaving modern

<sup>7</sup> W. Joynson-Hicks, Viscount Brentford (1865-1932). Home Secretary, 1924-29.



Indian problems to be solved by a Lord Harris is really too ludicrous. The Committee may be fatal to me. I cannot say. But of one thing I am certain, that is that my Bill would have been thrown out by the House of Lords without a moment's hesitation if the Committee device had not been adopted.

"I am glad you don't know this Parliament. You were never very fond of the House of Commons—You would not be fond of this one. It looks in parts like a Trades Union Congress, and in other parts like a meeting of a Provincial Chamber of Commerce. All the best of the old men have gone, and as for the new men—I have not yet seen the Prime Minister of the future. But of course it has not found itself. Its Government has been non-existent. With a Prime Minister absent in Paris with a great portion of his colleagues, it has been very difficult for the House of Commons to act with the forbearance with which it would wish to act and the control which is consistent with that forbearance.

"The Prime Minister says he is going back at the end of this week. I expect things will hum then. He will take control and stir things up. To what goal or to what end, I do not know.

"... My own view is that the Secretary of State should go every year to spend a week at least with the head of every province and a week with the Viceroy. Great Heavens above, if I were to suggest that policy! How furious would everybody in India be. At the same time I am very much worried by the difficulty of explaining oneself. I feel all the time that I am working feverishly, strangely, caring nothing for anything but India: that those with whom and through whom I have to work are very suspicious and, I fear, sometimes hostile. Nothing that I can do now will ever give the Public Service any confidence in me. They regard the present Secretary of State as their enemy. That is bad enough. But when you couple it with the traditional hostility of the Government of India to the India Office you have a state of affairs that can only be cured, it seems to me by a realisation that we are all part of one machine. That can only be done by intimate association."

The next day Montagu wrote to Ronaldshay:

"I wonder if you are ever oppressed, as I am, by a feeling of the enormous number of things that want doing in India; the

number of things that ought to be done quickly, and the lack of time in which to do them. And among all the things to which one could devote one's attention, I know of nothing which would repay so certainly as the work which you have made peculiarly your own—the improvement of the public health.

“ . . . If only I could get our Bill through quickly in order that we might devote our attention to the things more directly affecting the everyday life of the people than constitutional reform, I should be a happier man.”

About this time the Maharajah of Bikaner and the Aga Khan when dining with Lloyd George in Paris and being asked who would be the best man to succeed Chelmsford as Viceroy, strongly urged that it should be Montagu. In a letter to Lloyd George, Bikaner confirmed his views. “All—Princes as well as people,” he wrote, “would welcome most warmly such an appointment as there is no other candidate who could possibly command such widespread confidence or who, while possessing the necessary firmness to deal with any disorder or anarchical or seditious movements, is bound to inspire fresh hope and courage in the minds of the loyal people of India.”

Now that Montagu was back in London he was occupied with the question of appointing a Commission of Enquiry into the riots in April and in particular the tragedy at Amritsar. He wrote to Chelmsford on 17 July 1919, “A word about Dyer. It was the savage and inappropriate folly of the order which rouses my anger. I cannot admit that any service that Dyer has rendered anywhere can atone for action of this kind, and I am very much worried that he should have escaped punishment for an Order, the results of which are likely to be permanent.”

Montagu wrote again a month later on 29 August 1919:

“I am certain that we must face these occurrences with courage. Don't let us make the mistake of defending O'Dwyerism right or wrong. Nothing is so fatal to the British prestige in a developing country like India as a belief that there is no redress for mistakes and that whatever an official does, he will be backed, and, not only that he will be backed, but that his methods will be perpetuated.

“I sent you a telegram to-day because I hear unpleasant rumours, not from Indians, but from other sources, that at the end of last



month still public meetings were prohibited, newspapers were not allowed to be published, punitive measures were still being taken, and so on. Now what is the use of all this if it be true? Is it defensible in the first place and if it is defensible, is it any use? If you prohibit public meetings, if men have something to say to one another, they will say worse things, at private meetings. If a man cannot get his *Tribune* in Lahore, he will send for the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* or the *Bombay Chronicle*. You cannot draw a ring fence round a Province. Now if it had not been for the promised enquiry, I should have passed on my views long ago after expressing them officially to you. I don't for a moment suggest that you were wrong to back the Punjab Government and the military authorities whilst they were in trouble, but this is not inconsistent with expressing your definite opinion after the trouble is over. I state emphatically once again that there is no defence in my opinion either for the prohibition of lawyers from other Provinces to defend people on trial for serious crimes nor for whipping in the case of people not guilty of crime with violence, and it ought to be known publicly that your Government does not countenance such things. The idea of whipping a man for tearing down a notice is to my mind (and I know that you agree with me) ridiculous. A system of martial law which forces on Mr. Shafi's son-in-law the necessity of salaaming a European and insists upon the Senior Puisne Judge of the High Court being in his home by eight o'clock at night and the confiscation of his car—if these things are true, how can it make the Province better?

“I growl and grumble thus to you because I think the thing is serious and all chance of restoration of good feeling disappears unless people who are suffering from the things that were done under the stress of the time, know that there is somebody to condemn these actions.”

Meanwhile the Joint Committee (seven Peers and seven M.P.s) sat during July and August and heard a large number of witnesses. Montagu wrote to Willingdon on 15 August 1919:

“I wonder how you find Mrs. Besant as a correspondent. We have been examining her and crowds of other witnesses from the Indian Deputations before the Joint Committee. We are trying to

get through our work of collecting evidence faster and faster as the prospect of being able to adjourn, even for a short holiday, grows nearer; I could not wish, and would not dare, to do anything but induce the Committee to push on with their work so as to have a reasonable chance of getting some decent sort of Bill through to carry out our pledges; but the result, as you may imagine, is rather wearing as there are really not enough hours in the day to get through it all plus the Office business which goes on and on."

The Joint Committee suspended its sittings during September 1919, but Montagu was apparently unable to take the holiday which he so much needed and his letters are full of gloom. In a letter to George Lloyd, the Governor of Bombay, of 8 September 1919, he deplored the opposition of the Indian Civil Service:

"It is no use our shutting our eyes to the fact that the powers that be in India—the Services—are wholly against us in trying to transfer India from an estate which they manage into a living entity. This has got to be. They have got to grin and bear it. But what I suspect is this. They say, 'Very well, I have got to lose the powers of Local Government etc., but I am still allowed by all the rules to put in force the Seditious Meetings Act, the Press Act, the Right of Search, and all the rest of it. For every ounce they take from me, I will use to the fullest possible extent the powers that are left to me.' George, my son, this won't do. It may be a jaundiced picture. Bhuergr's allegations may have no substance in them. But it's your job and mine to satisfy ourselves that they have not, and that is why I send you this letter for your eager consideration."

When Montagu wrote to Chelmsford on 11 September and 2 October 1919 there were all too many occasions for gloom.

"11 September 1919

"More than anything else I am distressed by the feeling that we are getting more and more at cross purposes—Afghanistan, Reforms and so on. I seem to be everlastingly making suggestions to you which you cannot accept, and finding that I cannot accept your suggestions. I wish that we could get back into smoother waters."



“2nd October 1919

“At times I am bound to say that I feel depressed. Sometimes I am inclined to moan, ‘They always turn down my suggestions and my orders, and when they are compelled to accept my orders, if they are distasteful to them, they demand public acknowledgment of the differences of opinion between us.’ Of course this is an exaggeration which I do not permit myself to indulge in when I have the strength to avoid it. It is of course much easier for the Home Government and the Government of India to work together if they are in complete accord. This is impossible and working together becomes increasingly difficult the more widely we differ—increasingly difficult until such time when it becomes impossible. It is for this reason that I always try, so far as I can consistently with my duty, to defer, after stating my case, to your views; for the success of our efforts depends in minimising rather than increasing any tendency to any unbridgeable gap, though I should not be frank with you if I did not say that on some subjects and some times, I feel very grave apprehension.”

A letter to Willingdon of 2 October 1919 also shows some signs of overwork and depression:

‘I wish I could disabuse from your mind the feeling that everybody for whom you work is lacking in sympathy or desire to assist you. You used, and you will forgive my speaking to you very frankly, to complain to me with the frankness which I love to get from you, of Lord Chelmsford. I now notice in your letters that I am becoming as unsatisfactory to you as he is. Well, I must grin and bear the loss of your confidence and can only hope and pray that the time will come when you will reconsider your judgment in the light of fuller knowledge.”

The Joint Committee finished with evidence in mid-October and began to draft its Report. “I am anticipating”, Montagu wrote, “one of the most unrestful times even of my experience at the India Office.” On 14 November 1919 he wrote: “We are getting near the final stages on the Joint Committee of our work. It has been for me, as you will understand, in some respects an exhilarating, and in all respects an exacting time. I must own to a fair amount of satisfaction at what has already been decided.”

On 20 November 1919: "The Bill with the Joint Committee's Report is finally signed, sealed and delivered for the next stage in the Commons . . . If there is to be a fight, I find there is a part of me which is contemplating the prospect with pleasure, if only for the sake of a change from having to debate the whole thing point by point for hours at a stretch in the Joint Committee where the atmosphere was not congenial to scrapping of the give and take variety in which one can indulge in the House."

To a complaint by Curzon that Montagu failed to acknowledge letters Montagu sent what Curzon described as a charming reply:

"Your letter wrings my heart. I am shocked and horrified to think that when you find it possible among all your many duties and difficulties to render me such valuable assistance and advice, I am ill-mannered enough not to acknowledge your letters. It is a matter for which I owe you my sincerest apologies. Please accept my assurance that I get all your letters, read them with avidity and eagerness the moment they are delivered and act on them with hardly five minutes delay and as a rule in complete agreement with your views."

On 15 November 1919 Montagu received a remarkable letter from Annie Besant, urging him to become Viceroy—a suggestion which the Maharajah of Bikaner and the Aga Khan had already urged upon the Prime Minister.

The Government of India Bill passed the Committee stage in the House of Commons on 3 December and 4 December 1919 and the Third Reading on 5 December. Montagu wrote to Chelmsford on 5 December.

"I am so tired and pleased and irritated and altogether exhausted that I shall only be able to send you the barest line this week. We had the Bill in Committee on Wednesday for seven hours at a stretch, and last night again till one o'clock. This afternoon it passed the Third Reading without any dissentients after a couple of hours. We had two divisions in Committee, one on Provincial Autonomy and one on Women's Suffrage; but diarchy went through, with the usual taunts, without a division. The real hero of the



occasion was Whitley in the Chair, who made quite audacious but very comforting use of his power of selecting amendments. If it had not been for him, I should still be in the House getting on to my feet every five minutes to go through the usual torture of arguing down amendments, for hours in succession, and sinking deeper and deeper into the nightmare sensation of being condemned to watch an unending and execrably bad cinematograph film in which in some mysterious way I also had to play a number of parts. That is an ungrateful thing to say when it really and honestly was one of the most thankful moments of my life to see the response of the House when it put its final endorsement on the Bill. But I am writing for the mail and do not pretend that I have altogether shaken off the nightmare sensation as I write. . . . ”

## CHAPTER XVI

### *“I am Not Liking Life at All” (1920)*

Aet. 41

IN THE year 1920 Montagu was even more overworked and depressed than in 1919. He had a nervous breakdown (though he does not describe his illness in those words) from which he perhaps never fully recovered. A friend says that he became very melancholy and apprehensive of time and space, disease and danger.

His relations with the Viceroy, whom he had liked so much in 1917, deteriorated. Chelmsford seems to have been a soldierly character and to have faced difficulties in a cheerful and resolute frame of mind. He more and more tended to treat Montagu as a querulous child who must be rebuked for his low spirits. Montagu on his side complained that Chelmsford showed no enthusiasm for the Reforms and despised Chelmsford's settled policy of not moving further or faster than he could get his Executive Council to move with him. Already, in the autumn of 1919 he was so profoundly dissatisfied with Chelmsford and the Government of India that he drafted (but probably did not send) a long letter to the Prime Minister with the startling proposal that Chelmsford should be recalled and that Montagu himself should be appointed Viceroy. This draft letter stresses the lack of political instinct of the Government of India (“They do not consult, they do not explain, they do not advocate”) and the cumbrousness of the administrative machine. The Government of India, it is contended, made a misguided Treaty with Afghanistan and badly mishandled the Punjab riots; they show no enthusiasm for the Reforms, and fail to advocate them. “The real need in India is a Viceroy capable of running a hard-worked office quickly, a man of Cabinet experience, a man with political knowledge. . . I have no interests to serve or ambitions, I am absorbed in India.”

On top of the severe strain of piloting the Government of India Bill through the House of Commons and of dissatisfaction



with the Viceroy and the Government of India, Montagu felt acute distress at the Peace terms offered to Turkey. He was in Paris from 8 January to 21 January 1920 and felt that his visit had been "almost a complete waste of time."

On his return the doctor ordered a rest cure in a nursing home. "I hate it", Montagu wrote, "but I find myself so hopelessly tired that there is positively nothing for me to do but acquiesce."

Montagu stayed in the nursing home till the end of March.<sup>1</sup> Against the doctor's orders he wrote a long letter to the Prime Minister on 14 February 1920 suggesting that he should succeed Chelmsford as Viceroy. Since he makes no reference to the letter drafted in the previous autumn, it may perhaps be inferred that that draft was not sent.

"Dear Prime Minister,

"I must worry you in the midst of all your other preoccupations by a letter on the subject of the Indian Viceroyalty.

"With all the emphasis in my power, I appeal to you to give Fisher my present office and let me go to India for three years. What I should like would be that as the author of the new constitution, I should be allowed, as Minister in Attendance, to be present when the Prince of Wales inaugurates it, and to remain as temporary Viceroy, in order to start the organisation of the new order of things, for 3 years saying nothing about the future. During that time I will set to work to get over such difficulties as may exist in the appointment of a Royal Viceroy, so that I can be ready to come home whenever that may be found possible, and when the reforms are working smoothly. I cannot tell you the importance that I attach to this, and I know that I can be assured of a sympathetic hearing; for you told me when you were good enough to appoint me to the high office that I now hold, that you would not allow precedents to stand in your way in sending me to India if I had been a success at the India Office.

"I base my claims on the following considerations.

"(1) Although India has not been peaceful, it is at any rate in a

<sup>1</sup> "I shaved off my moustache when I was in bed in order to find something to do with my time and my wife would never let me grow it again. It shortens my life because it has made dressing a longer job." Letter of 22 April to Willingdon.

far better position than any other similar country (compare Ireland and Egypt), I do not say that in the revolutionary condition of the world we shall pull through, but I am absolutely convinced, and every telegram I receive from India convinces me still further, that now that a tolerable peace with Turkey is likely to ensue, no better chance of pulling through exists than in really working the letter and the spirit of the new Reforms Act. I have only recently, within the last few minutes, been reading a letter from Sinha giving an account of the reception he has received based entirely upon the acceptability of the Reforms Act, which he describes as something unparalleled in his knowledge of India and which he assures me is of far greater significance than the noisy minority who profess in public to be disappointed with the measure.

“(2) Now there does not exist among the Indian Services a man of political instinct, and I have no hope that the Act will be properly worked unless somebody who thoroughly believes in it is at the head of affairs. Great though the support has been that I have received, there is nobody else. Willingdon [Governor of Madras] excellent in temperament and a rare exception to the rule that there is no political instinct is not a good administrator and cannot be expected to put his back into getting through the innumerable changes still wanted in India, and does not believe in detail in the Reforms scheme as ultimately shaped. It would be fatal to appoint someone who would have to spend the first two or three years in learning where matters are, and you must remember that I have been associated with the India Office now for 6 years.

“If you want an example of what I mean, it is to be found in this way. That the whole atmosphere of India at the present moment is, I fear, inclined to give to the Indians as much as they must under the law, but to give it grudgingly, fighting over every detail, and then gloating over the increase in the size of the extremist party. They have set up a Reforms Department and would you believe it, it did not number in the Department one single Indian, either as an Advisory Committee or as an Adviser, or in any other capacity. I protested in the strongest terms, and I hear as a consequence that they are appointing an old worn out man who could not give nearly as much assistance from the India point of view as Lord Halsbury [then 97 years old] could to the Home Office at the present moment. This is the sort of thing that makes Indians



believe that we do not mean business. No Act of Parliament is any use unless it is worked in the spirit as well as in the letter. And it is because I do not want the policy to fail because of the way it is worked that I want to go to India for which I care more than anything else in the world.

“Two objections must be contemplated. The first is the fierce opposition of the English Community and of Lord Curzon. May I separate them? The English Community is nothing like so hostile, as I know from my letters, as the English newspapers in India, carefully nurtured by political opponents, would have us believe. They are in no case as important as the Indians, and I am egoistic enough to believe that if I was there, I could get over their opposition by talking to them, persuading them, arguing with them, in a way that the Government of India never does, either to English or to Indians. I would beg of you in a matter about which I feel so keenly, not to dismiss my arguments as the arguments of a man who has been made egoistical by a small success. Most men, if they have energy, can make a success of something that they love so much as I love the cause of self-government in India, and its continued loyalty to the British Empire. I have never felt certain of my success in any other office that has been suggested to me. You will remember that suggestion which was made when the Chief Whip died<sup>2</sup> that I should succeed him. I knew I should fail there. You know that Asquith made me the offer of the Chief Secretaryship in Ireland. Long before Bonar Law had objected and Duke had accepted, I had written to Asquith explaining that it would be a very bad appointment. And you know that I have discussed with you sometimes the possibility of my being a good Chancellor of the Exchequer and I have always explained that I was not up to the job and that my reputation for financial ability was quite fraudulent. I can, therefore, at least claim that I do not seek all or every office. In fact this is the only one that I feel now I could accept, except for the one that I now hold.

“As to Lord Curzon, he has of course no interest in the fierce nationalism and proud patriotism of the educated Indian. He has no sympathy with what other people think, and has a love of precedents. I have so small an opinion that his great abilities would lead him to support a policy designed to reconcile a country

<sup>2</sup> P. H. Illingworth died January 1915.

that I feel encouraged to dismiss his undoubted opposition.

"It has been represented to me that my duty lies in the House of Commons, which has treated me in the 14 years I have been there with great generosity. I am afraid that in any case I propose at the next General Election to give up the House of Commons in which I know I shall never do any further useful work.

"In conclusion, the policy which I commended to you originally in the speech I made on the Mesopotamian Report, just when I was going to become your Minister of Reconstruction and which you in practice asked me to carry out by sending me to the India Office, is now your policy. The achievement of it is yours, obtained by the support you have always given me and the opportunity that you decided to afford me.

"Yours sincerely,

"E. S. M."

The Prime Minister replied that he could not come to any decision at the moment, and when Montagu in May and June 1920 again wrote to Lloyd George about the appointment of a new Viceroy, the idea that he himself should hold the post is not even alluded to. A letter to Chelmsford of 3 June 1920 suggests that in future the functions of Viceroy and Prime Minister should be separated and that, in order to give time to explore all the difficulties of this novel idea, the Prince of Wales should act as Viceroy for a few months and that Harcourt Butler, Governor of the United Provinces, should act in the Prince's name for two or three years.<sup>3</sup> Montagu recognised some of the difficulties of his suggestion. "Would not the representative of the King, the Titular Viceroy, find his life very boring? He would have to entertain, but entertaining in India means sitting next to the same woman at every meal all through one's term of Office. He would shoot, play polo, attend races; but these amusements, tempting to the young, become irksome after a time."

Lloyd George rejected both the idea of a Royal Prince and the idea of Harcourt Butler. Austen Chamberlain declined the post. Montagu suggested a number of other names—Winston Churchill, H. A. L. Fisher, and several others. Of Sir Winston

<sup>3</sup> King George V at the time of the Durbar told Lord Hardinge that he hoped to send his sons in turn to act as Viceroy. (Hardinge, *My Indian Years*, p. 58).



Churchill, Montagu wrote: "It might result in a great failure. It might be a great success. Whichever it was, it would be great."

On 5 November 1920 Montagu wrote to the Prime Minister once again, urging a quick decision. "If you take a Governor for India, I feel convinced that, notwithstanding all his shortcomings Lord Willingdon is your only choice." George Lloyd would not do, because he had offended the Princes. On 30 November he suggested (surprisingly to my mind) Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith,<sup>4</sup> who had been Permanent Secretary to the Board of Trade.

On 7 December 1920 Montagu wrote yet again. "Austen would not accept. After him, Reading is probably the best, then Winston then Lytton<sup>5</sup> and then Willingdon or Willingdon and then Lytton." Finally on 16 December 1920, "Mere lapse of time has now made it impossible to consider the claims of any man now in India. . . Failing Chamberlain and Winston, I think Lytton seems to me the best choice. Strong representations are being made to me that Hardinge might go back again. Undoubtedly the most popular Viceroy of modern times, his return would be received with acclamation." Lord Reading's appointment was announced on 9 January 1921.

The first letter which Montagu, on his return to work, wrote to Chelmsford on 1 April 1920 indicates the chief troubles with which Montagu was faced—distrust and dislike of Chelmsford, the Punjab riots and the Turkish Treaty.

"Let me next say one very frank word to you. I have discovered both before I left work in your letters and in your telegrams and in the papers I was allowed to see during my absence, indication of irritability. I am not going to pause to give you a description of, or an apology for, my methods of work or my mentality. These little things distress me only because they show to me that there are limits even to your patience, and because I am perfectly certain in my own mind that in the English Press in India and among your associates there are people who try to make mischief between us."

<sup>4</sup> Sir Hubert Llewellyn Smith (1864-1945), G.C.B., Permanent Secretary, Board of Trade, 1907-19; Chief Economic Adviser, 1919-27.

<sup>5</sup> Earl Lytton (1876-1947), K.G., G.C.I.E., G.C.S.I., Under Secretary of State, India Office, 1922.

On 8 April 1920 the Report of the Hunter Committee of enquiry into the riots of April 1919 had at last been received and Montagu wrote to Chelmsford:

“April 8, 1920

“I do not regard the Report of the Hunter Committee, on first reading as having exonerated Sir Michael O’Dwyer. On the contrary they are inclined to say in guarded language what I would say about the sort of rule for which he was responsible. . . I was not at the India Office during most of O’Dwyer’s regime. Whether the ring-fence policy, which he to some extent advocated, was necessary or not, I do not choose to say. I have not the material. But let all people beware that when they contemplate executive action, deportation, suppression of Press, prohibition of public meetings, prohibition of free movement, they are bound sooner or later, to reap the reward. It is an expedient which perhaps tides them over for the moment. I am convinced that it does not tide them over in the long run. . . Do not let us shut our eyes to the fact that there must be a harvest. The greatest administrator and the greatest Governor is the man who keeps his Province quiet and orderly without recourse, or with the minimum of recourse to those powers with which he has been entrusted.”

On the same day he wrote to Lord Willingdon, Governor of Madras, who had been his friend since Cambridge days:

“At home the poor old Liberal Party is broken to pieces. The peace of the world does not seem more secure by reason of Versailles, and I am not liking life at all. You may wake up any morning to find that you have a Secretary of State who will be much less bother to you, far less obstinate and opinionated, far more successful in doing everything you want; but certainly not one who loves you more and tears open your letters with greater avidity than

“Your devoted friend and admirer,

“E.S.M.”

On 29 April 1920 Montagu wrote to Chelmsford, “at a moment of depression, having wasted my energies for the last month or two on something that happened over a year ago. [Amritsar in



April 1919]. Why is it that we have to spend so much time on things that have happened instead of devoting our energies on what we want to see happen? I have failed to produce a decent Turkish Peace . . . I have isolated myself from my colleagues and such is the racial bitterness in India that nobody who tries can satisfy either Indian or European. The whole thing looks gloomy . . . I wonder whether the sun will ever shine again?"

The more Montagu brooded over the Hunter Committee's Report, the more his essentially liberal outlook was confirmed. "Either we must govern India as O'Dwyer governed the Punjab or we can govern it in another way. The truth is that I do not believe that you will be able to go on governing it in that way without the most frightful troubles and difficulties. . . I feel strongly that we are just getting over a day's storm to inaugurate a decade of trouble, and I cannot be a party to it any longer."

The Cabinet appointed a Committee with Montagu as Chairman to consider the Hunter Committee's Report. Its other members were the Lord Chancellor (Lord Findlay), Lord Milner, Mr. Shortt,<sup>6</sup> Mr. Fisher, Mr. Churchill and the Attorney General, (Sir Gordon Hewart who was unable to attend). The Report was to be published with Resolutions by the Government of India and a Despatch by the Secretary of State, and every effort was made to avoid revealing differences between the Government of India and the Home Government. Montagu was "full of apprehension as to the results of the publication [on 26 May 1920] of the Hunter Committee Report and the action of the Government which I foresee will please no one because as usual we have to hold the balance between the conflicting schools of thought."

Montagu's apprehensions were well-founded. The debate in the House of Commons on 8 July 1920 on the Report of the Hunter Committee was a difficult one and Montagu's speech was a Parliamentary failure. Montagu said that he would ask the House one question.

"If an officer justified his conduct, no matter how gallant his record is, by saying that there was no question of undue severity, that if his means had been greater the casualties would have been

<sup>6</sup> Sir Edward Shortt (1862-1935), Chief Secretary for Ireland from April 1918.

greater, and that the motive was to teach a moral lesson to the Punjab, I say without hesitation . . . that it is the doctrine of terrorism. Once you are entitled to have regard neither to the intentions nor to the conduct of a particular gathering, and to shoot and to go on shooting with all the horrors that were here involved, in order to teach somebody else a lesson, you are embarking on terrorism, to which there is no end."

Montagu went on to characterise the order to salaam officers as racial discrimination and the whipping of schoolboys and flogging of a wedding party as frightfulness. "Are you", Montagu asked the House, "going to keep hold on India by terrorism, racial humiliation and subordination and frightfulness, or are you going to rest it upon the goodwill, and the growing goodwill of the people of your Indian Empire?" There was, Montagu said, an alternative to terrorism. "It is to put the coping stone on the glorious work which England has accomplished in India by leading India to a complete free partnership in the British Commonwealth, to say to India: 'We hold British lives sacred, but we hold Indian lives sacred too'."

This passionate advocacy of liberal doctrine served only to infuriate a Conservative House of Commons who believed that a Radical Secretary of State had inflicted injustice on a gallant soldier whose action to suppress a mutiny deserved support. When Montagu added fuel to the flames by saying that his opponents classed every educated Indian as an agitator, an Hon. Member asked what was the relevance of this to the case of General Dyer. Montagu insisted that the question before the House was:

"Is your theory of domination or rule in India the ascendancy of one race over another, of domination and subordination [cries of 'No'] or is your theory that of partnership? If you are applying domination as your theory, then it follows that you must use the sword with increasing severity [cries of 'No'] until you are driven out of the country by the united opinion of the civilised world" [Interruption an Hon. Member: 'Bolshevism'].

The debate, which was technically on the Motion to reduce the salary of the Secretary of State for India by £100 lasted from 4.0 p.m.



till nearly 11.0 p.m. The Government was skilfully defended by Churchill. The most effective attacks were made by Sir Edward Carson, who argued that the question at issue was not a choice between two abstract doctrines, but the question whether General Dyer's career should be ruined for attempting to deal with a difficult situation to the best of his ability, and by Sir W. Joynson-Hicks (later Lord Brentford), who had just returned from a visit to India.

In the course of his speech Joynson-Hicks said:

“My Right Hon. Friend the Secretary of State has for some time past entirely lost the confidence of Indian Civil Service throughout India . . . . The speech which he has made this afternoon will have utterly destroyed any little shred of confidence which was left to him, not merely in the minds of the Indian Civil Servants, but in the minds of the British army in India . . . . The speech of the Secretary of State for India was merely one long vituperation of General Dyer and his action in India, and one long appeal to racial passion.”

Rupert Gwynne bitterly attacked Montagu, saying that his sympathies were with those who were opposed to law and order. Bonar Law, in winding up the debate, said that personal attacks upon Montagu were unfair. The whole Cabinet were responsible for policy in India. Bonar Law expressed the fullest sympathy with General Dyer, while endorsing the criticisms upon him. The Government won the day by a vote of 247 to 37.

The debate in the House of Lords lasted two days (19 and 20 July 1920), and the Government were defeated by 129 to 86, despite the defence of the Government by the Lord Chancellor (Lord Birkenhead) and Lord Curzon.

Many of those who were most vocal on Indian affairs in England were ex-Indian Civil Servants. Their sympathies tended to be with General Dyer in whose favour a large subscription was collected. Inevitably Indian opinion was embittered by treating the man responsible for the Amritsar massacre as a British national hero and this bitterness and the complete distrust of British intension gave rise to the non-cooperation movement which wrecked the success of the 1919 Reforms.

The House of Commons debate on 8 July added to Montagu's gloom. To Chelmsford on 15 July 1920 he wrote:

"You will see that up to the end of my letter I have been shirking any mention of that dreadful debate. I find myself in a frame of mind in which I either write nothing at all or inflict on you in full the speech which I now think I ought to have made. I am not going to do the last and I must not do the first. But what I do say is this. Many allegations have been and are being made against me personally, and many attacks have been and are being made on me. There is only one sort of allegation or attack which gives me real and deep concern at the moment, and that is the sort of attack which is directed, intentionally or not, against you and your Government. I ought to have said a great deal more to make your position quite clear. I failed to say it; and if the result is that I have left unanswered any charge which reflects on you, my first obligation is to set it right. My dear Chelmsford, if you think I have done anything of the kind, don't be afraid, don't conceal it, don't add it to your score against me—though I have no right to talk like that—but remember that you are dealing with a man who feels it to be his debt of honour to help you.

"Now they are getting very pertinacious about Gandhi. They want to know why you don't lock him up at once because they disapprove of him. This may be more serious for us than the other charges. At present it is all my fault because I once said that Gandhi was my friend. At question time yesterday I repeatedly explained that I was going to leave the methods of maintaining order to your discretion. I am most certainly going to adhere to that; but I have got to confess that one of the results of the dead set which is being made against me is likely to be a running cross-examination of what steps you are taking to handle the Khaliphath and the non-cooperation movements."

The misery which the House of Commons debate caused to Montagu was enhanced by a letter from Chelmsford of 14 July 1920 which protested against Montagu's charges of frightfulness and terrorising. To this Montagu replied on 11 August.

"Now I must come to your letter of 14 July. I was only too



conscious of the deficiencies in my part in the debate, and I asked you how I could help to make them good . . . . I think I must make it clear that I adhere to everything I said in the debate. I am sorry that it does not represent your views, but you must take it that it represents mine. My regrets at the time, strengthened by all that has happened since, were not about what I said, but about what I did not say. If I had had the physical strength to make a much longer speech, I am sure that the choice that I put to the House of Commons, which was originally intended to be the end of a close argument, would not have caused the controversy that has since been raised. That is what I meant, and I am sorry I failed to say it all: but I cannot allow you to think that I wished I had not said anything that I did say. . . . As regards the word "frightfulness" it was absolutely necessary, in my mind, to show when we were told that O'Dwyer had saved India from mutiny, that it was the principle on which he acted, apart from the immediate results, that was condemned. To do that it was no use mincing words in the debate. The crawling order was frightfulness, and the shooting to produce moral effect was terrorism; and in the atmosphere of the debate there was nothing to be gained and much to be lost by not saying so. I do not regret in the least having called a spade a spade, and I am sufficiently accustomed to misrepresentation to realise that an epithet used for a certain incident will be applied by our enemies as though I had applied it to the whole regime to which, as I pointed out in my despatch and in my subsequent speech at Cambridge, these events were exceptions . . . . I have had a hard and bitter time, harder and more bitter than can be imagined. I do not ask for sympathy, because what I have had to go through is a part of my task . . . . Looking back now the thing I regret more than anything else, now that I know the sort of man he is, is that we did not deal more severely with O'Dwyer. We are in for a bad time in India, and I regard this as one of the most serious causes, and I cannot believe that I did my duty in this respect. I was so guided in my view by your anxieties. I was so anxious to recognise that O'Dwyer's indomitable war service condoned everything else, that I laid myself open to the charge of not dealing justly with a man, who is undoubtedly the idol of those who are determined to oppose the policy on which you and I are united. . . I am infinitely depressed, and nothing but a

determination not to appear to desert the policy for which you and I stand, gives me the heart to go on with my work. I see the wear in your wonderful patience too in the writing of a letter, which has added to my depression. I can only hope that united we shall find the strength to carry it through to the end."

A letter to Lord Willingdon of 9 September 1920 is perhaps the first specific confession that Montagu had come round to the view that the policy of self-government by stages laid down by the Declaration of 20 August 1917 which Montagu had so often and so eloquently defended, was a mistake. The letter also contains a notable prophecy of the end of the story some twenty-seven years later.

"I personally do not believe that the Dyer incident was the cause of the great racial exacerbation which is now in existence and which has got to be lived through and down before we can get into a more hopeful atmosphere. There is nobody who can do it better than you. This racial consciousness is inevitable. As soon as the Indians were told that we agreed with them and they were to become partners with us, it instilled into their minds an increased feeling of existing subordination and a realisation of everything by which this subordination was expressed. Similarly, when the Europeans were told that, after driving the Indians for so many years, that regime was to be over and they might find themselves forced to cooperation with the Indians, or even forced to allow Indians to rule India, their race consciousness sprang up afresh. I am convinced in my own mind that that has been the fatal mistake of our policy in India. We ought to have let Indians run their own show from the beginning, with all its inefficiency and imperfections. Development would have been much slower, but the inevitable transition would have been less difficult. I am, however, satisfied that the temper of democratic countries such as ours is increasingly against remaining in a country where we are not wanted, and we have either got to make our peace with the Indians, or, as the educated classes grow, we shall find a strenuous desire in this country to get rid of India and all its bother."

After a fortnight in Scotland, Montagu wrote two more very



gloomy letters to Chelmsford on 9 September and 16 September 1920.

"I believe your treatment of Gandhi will be successful. I hope it may. I am quite certain that if you have to move against him, he will hunger strike and die in prison, and then I don't know where we shall be. You may be quite sure that I shall support you in whatever you do in this matter, and that I shall not lend myself to any effort to rush you. What does alarm me is that up till now it has always seemed that extremism in India has really been either anti-British or national. It seems to me that it is going to be international. The Bolsheviks, in their animosity to all settled government, are using the grievances of the Mohammedans, and what frightens me is the way in which Pan-Islamism which, as I think foolishly, we have made hostile to the British Empire, is taking charge of the extremist movement.

"... I am sorry you find my letters so dull. I have been much over-worked, more worried than I can say, more unhappy, alternating between moments in a belief that all things will come right and moments in a belief that failure will come, which a constant repetition that I have done my duty fails to do much to relieve.

"... I have had a fortnight's fishing in Scotland, or rather, sitting by the banks of rivers, which have dried up at my approach.

"In a few months time now, you and I will meet to talk over things that will then have become history to both of us, and I feel certain that you will not have anything to reproach yourself with, but much to congratulate yourself upon, in your Viceroyalty taken as a whole. I believe we have turned the darkest corner and things will improve. My only fear is that the increasing hatred of Empire, which democracy has evidenced by the extraordinary antics of the Egyptian proposals, will make our reform scheme unworkable, and the landslide will take place. Well, after all we never intended it to be more than transitory, and if others choose to hasten what we intended to come gradually, they may be right; it is not our fault."

Montagu's relations with Chelmsford did not improve. He wrote on 7 October 1920: "Your letter of 8th September begins with the rebuke for which I have almost accustomed myself to look

in each succeeding mail. You now accuse me of spreading pessimism . . . . I really cannot think that these continued analyses of my character can be very profitable to either of us, and personally I should have thought that a little less analysis and a little more first-hand news of what is going on in India would be a good deal more helpful."

On 13 October 1920 Montagu had to have a minor operation on his leg, which was yet one more cause of gloom. He wrote to Chelmsford on 20 October and 28 October 1920.

"20 October

"There is very little to write about, and it is dismal enough such as it is. The coal strikes, riots by alleged ex-soldiers in Whitehall, and myself tied by the leg in the country, feeling forlornly out of action and rather out of spirits.

"... I am getting more than a little worried about the length to which the activities of Gandhi and his colleagues may go. I see a report in the newspapers, as well as the private reports which have been sent to me, that they have begun to drill recruits for their organisation without interference. I cannot very well understand this. . . . I ought to point out that reports of this kind are likely to have exciting effects, not only upon a harassed Secretary of State but also on the British public to whom he has to answer. That is an aspect of the case which we must remember. And he must have an answer hot from those he desires to support."

"28 October

"I have already written to you on your comments on my supposed diffusion of pessimistic utterances in this country. You now reproach me for inflicting them on you. . . If I have written in a gloomy vein I cannot help it and do not regret it, because it is useless to pretend that I am cheerful over the situation as it presents itself to me. Confidence as to the ultimate result is not in the least inconsistent with grave anxiety as to the present. I quite agree with you that calmness and firmness are the two great needs for the moment. I am sure that we should both agree that placidity is a very different thing, which neither of us could afford."

The problem of Gandhi was increasingly difficult. Montagu



had hoped that Gandhi and the non-cooperation movement would fizzle out, but the Mahatma was more and more widely revered as a leader and a saint and anti-government feeling was fanned by Amritsar and the Khaliphat controversy. Montagu left the decision whether to arrest Gandhi (who was openly and admittedly trying to overthrow the Government) to the authorities in India. He explained his own views privately to Willingdon on 9 November 1920.

“But I don’t think it is quite fair to say that to let Gandhi alone is nothing but drift. The whole point that is giving us all the devil of a trouble is exactly when to intervene if intervene we must. I suppose you can say that Gandhi, consciously or unconsciously, plays on his reputation as a saint; i.e. he knows we are afraid to touch him because we cannot face the row. That is one way of putting it if you like. But it cuts both ways. The nearer Gandhi goes to incitement to violence, the more his reputation as a saint is damaged. I don’t deny that his influence would still be enormous, but it would become the influence of a political leader, and of one among many, instead of the influence of a unique and single-minded saint. We may of course, have to face the row, and the row may be a big one. But it is not just drift to say that we don’t intervene until the point when he passes from the one into the other, which is the point at which the character of his influence is quite likely to change. Now this is not by any means a complete defence of non-interference at present. It is a defence against the argument that we are hanging on indefinitely simply because we are afraid of Gandhi.”

## CHAPTER XVII

### *The Turkish Peace Negotiations (1919-1922)*

Aet. 40 to 43

THE STORY of the Turkish Peace negotiations played an important part in Montagu's life, for it obsessed his thoughts for three years and finally led to his dismissal from office.

The Khalifat movement was launched by Mohammedans in 1919 to support the demands of the All-India Muslim League that the Sultan of Turkey should retain control of the Holy Places and there should be a complete reconciliation between the British Empire and Muslim States. Mohammedan opinion was shocked by the harsh peace terms offered to Turkey in May 1920, and threatened measures of non-cooperation if their demands were ignored. As regards the position of the Sultan, the bitter feelings aroused were based on a false premise. The Turkish Nationalist Movement which came into being to oppose the offered peace terms was an anti-clerical movement and in the end it was Mustapha Kemal who abolished the Khaliph.

It was a further tragic irony that the reasonable concessions to Turkey for which Montagu had pleaded in vain since 1919 were obtained and surpassed in 1924 as the result of the war-weariness and quarrels of the Allies and Kemal's victories, and it was Curzon who eventually made with Turkey the kind of peace for which Montagu had so long argued in vain.

Month after month from March 1919 to July 1924 a peace settlement with Turkey was postponed. On 15 May 1919 Greek troops landed in Smyrna. After months of military stalemate and a defeat in June 1920, the tide turned and the Greeks were victorious in July. In consequence the Allies imposed harsh terms on the Constantinople Government in the Treaty of Sèvres in August 1920.

But meanwhile this Constantinople Government had become a shadow, and in Turkey as a whole real power rested with the



Nationalist Government of Mustapha Kemal, which denounced the Sèvres Treaty.

Then in November 1920 the pro-Ally Greek Government of Venizelos was defeated at a General Election by the adherents of King Constantine, whom the Allies regarded as a pro-German. On 5 December 1920 a plebiscite in Greece was almost unanimously in favour of King Constantine's return. This made it difficult to pursue a pro-Greek policy, but the issue really depended on the results of the Greco-Turkish war rather than on Inter-Allied Conferences. The war went on inconclusively and Allied offers of mediation were rejected by both sides, and in March 1922 an inter-Allied Conference was about to try once more to find a solution acceptable to both sides. The main questions to be settled were whether the Turkish Government should be turned out of Constantinople and whether Adrianople and Smyrna should remain Turkish or be ceded to Greece.

This is the background to Montagu's efforts to get the Cabinet to accept the pro-Turkish policy which, he believed, would satisfy the agitators in India and enable the Reforms to be introduced in a peaceful atmosphere. The obstacles which he met with were Lloyd George's pro-Greek and rabidly anti-Turkish views, Curzon's desire to expel the Turkish Government from Constantinople and set up there an inter-Allied Commission and the feeling that the complex of problems was troublesome and the longer it could be postponed, the better; on this point alone the Allies agreed. Montagu's obsession with this question cost him happiness and health and eventually his political career; he was repeatedly and emphatically told both by Chelmsford and Reading that anxiety amongst Mohammedans about the Turkish Peace terms was the most serious element in the political situation in India and this conviction that all efforts to maintain law and order in India were being defeated by a wholly mistaken policy in regard to Turkey explains the desperate tone of letter after letter which Montagu sent to Lloyd George. The first of such letters was written on 15 April 1919.

“Representing the interests of India I have a special and direct responsibility for the peace which is contemplated with Turkey. I feel that a peace such as is proposed will be hateful to Indian

Mohammedans and cannot fail to augment the forces already strong which make for disaffection in India. What ought I to do? I realise the grave responsibility which would rest upon me if I were to contemplate leaving the office with which you have entrusted me at this critical moment in the history of India. I am more than ever convinced that an Indian Reform Bill is urgently necessary—a Reform Bill which should go at least as far as the proposals which the Viceroy and I put before the public and in some respects should go further. All the ambition that I possess is centred upon achieving the passage of such a Bill and I was never so hopeful as I am to-day of ultimate success. It would of course be a source of infinite grief to me if I had to leave the work at the conclusion of the preparatory stages. The grief would be all the greater as I fear it must inevitably lead to further delay when every moment is of importance.

“For this reason you will easily understand that apart from many other and all personal considerations I would not contemplate resignation lightly, that I would and will do everything to avoid it, that I would do my best to put up with any differences of opinion with my colleagues on almost any subject for this supreme end.”

Philip Kerr replied to this letter from Paris on 26 April 1919 to the effect that there was little prospect of an early decision as to the Turkish Peace terms.

Montagu crossed to Paris again for a short time in May 1919. The Indian Delegation were heard by the Supreme Council and the next day Montagu followed this up by writing the following letter to President Wilson:

*Very Private and Confidential*

“17 May 1919

“Dear President Wilson,

“At the last moment as we were going out this afternoon you used the word ‘mandate’ as applied to Turkey. My Mohammedan friends would hate a mandatory because they would be so suspicious that it was disguised annexation. But their attitude of hostility would be largely modified if the mandatory was a country of undoubted integrity and disinterestedness with a length of purse and the capacity to assist the Turk to restart life.



"If the mandatory were the Italians, who annexed Tripoli after an unprovoked war and have never succeeded in restoring it to order and have no money with which to develop Turkey, nothing will convince the Mohammedans that this is not annexation. There would not be a single Turk who would welcome the 'friends' appointed to assist her by the League of Nations. The whole mandatory principle throughout the world would be vitiated.

"If, however, the mandatory were the Americans, with whom she never fought, whose history is known in the Philippines, whose disinterestedness is beyond dispute—that would be a different matter altogether.

"I was a little inclined to think this afternoon that my friends emphasised too much the Turkishness of Constantinople. As a matter of fact, although the Turks are the largest block of the population, they are not in an absolute majority. But curiously enough the same is true, according to American figures, of the Greeks and Smyrna, and although the Mohammedans will of course resent the loss either of Constantinople or Smyrna, the arguments which give Smyrna to the Greeks make it absolutely imperative for leaving Constantinople to the Turks.

"Forgive this note of explanation. We felt that we had taken up too much of your time for me to emphasise these points this afternoon.

"Your sincerely,  
"E.S.M."

To this letter President Wilson replied:

*Private and Confidential*

"Paris, 19 May 1919

"My dear Mr. Secretary

"Thank you very much for your confidential note of the seventeenth of May. I was very much impressed and instructed by the interview of Saturday and hope I shall know better how to play my own part in dealing with the critical questions of Turkish Sovereignty. Your letter gives me the additional guidance I need.

"Cordially and sincerely Yours,  
"Woodrow Wilson."

On 22 June 1919 Montagu wrote a long letter to the Prime

Minister. He reminded him that, at the meeting of the British Ministers about Turkey, Balfour and Curzon had been in a minority of two in arguing for the removal of the Sultan from Constantinople; yet Balfour on the Supreme Council was arguing in favour of the minority view. Montagu said that neither his Indian colleagues nor he himself could accept this view: "I cannot reconcile it to my conscience to be a party to a Treaty which does a thing which, in my opinion, is going to be of infinite trouble to the British Empire and to India. . . . As my Prime Minister and my friend, I would ask you, what am I to do?" To this and to three further letters of 26 June, 20 August and 8 September 1919 Montagu received no reply. Indeed, in all these letters Montagu voiced his despair, but did not offer his resignation, so that the letters were all too easy to ignore.

In December 1919 there was a further Ministerial discussion about peace terms for Turkey and yet once again Montagu wrote a despairing note to the Prime Minister. He repeated all that he had so often said before against "the Curzon Plan" to turn the Turks out of Constantinople and Thrace. He made an official request that Indian troops should be withdrawn from Turkey. He ventured on a prophecy: "It is my deliberate opinion", he wrote, "that the Turk will not assent to this peace, that you will have the force necessary to drive him out of Constantinople, but that in Asia Minor they will at once cause you infinite trouble in league with the Bolsheviks and that it is impossible to see how far this may not extend."

On 1 January 1920 Montagu told the Viceroy that he might resign if he were right in his gloomy prognostications. But at this moment the situation improved; Curzon's plan was rejected by the Cabinet, despite support for it from Lloyd George and Balfour. "Curzon returned to the Foreign Office in a mood of angered despair."<sup>1</sup>

While Montagu was absent on his rest cure, a Conference of Foreign Ministers and Ambassadors had been sitting at the Foreign Office under Curzon, drawing up the detailed terms of the Turkish Treaty. Montagu, on his return from convalescence, was astonished to learn that the representative whom he had appointed had consistently been refused a hearing. Montagu therefore on

<sup>1</sup> Curzon, *The Last Phase*, p. 113.



9 April 1920 drew up a Memorandum for circulation to the Peace Conference then sitting at San Remo. Montagu recalled the Prime Minister's declaration of January 1918 and his reference to this on 26 February 1920, when he said: "This was not an offer to the Turks . . . We have a solemn pledge and they (the Mohammedans of India) accepted it and they are disturbed at the prospect of our not abiding by it. . . There is nothing which would damage British power in Asia more than the feeling that you could not trust the British word. That is the danger. Of course it would be a fatal reputation for us."

Montagu insisted that in fulfilment of our pledge we must leave Thrace, including Adrianople, to the Turks and we must leave Smyrna under Turkish sovereignty, with local autonomy for Thrace and Smyrna and proportionate representation of minorities. Montagu also felt that, apart from the pledge, the proposed terms could not be permanent and could not be enforced.

Montagu sent copies of the paper for circulation to the San Remo Conference to Sir Maurice Hankey, and asked if the Prime Minister desired his attendance at San Remo. Sir Maurice replied on 9 April 1920 that on a previous occasion "the Prime Minister's view was that it was for him, as the senior British representative, to represent the British case as a whole and that it would not be in order for the Indian Delegation to address the Peace Conference direct." He added that "the Prime Minister proposes that Lord Curzon should be the only British Minister to accompany him to San Remo."

Montagu then wrote the following letter—surely a very unwise one—to the Prime Minister on 15 April 1920:

"I regret to trouble you, but I must with great respect insist that my Memorandum be forwarded to the Supreme Council. I claim this as a right for the following reasons.

"(1) I hold from the King, signed by himself with Great Seal affixed, an appointment as 'Plenipotentiary in respect of Our Empire of India.' This appointment gives to me 'all manner of Power and Authority to treat, adjust and conclude with such Ministers, Commissioners or Plenipotentiaries as may be vested with similar power' and Authority on the part of any Powers or States as aforesaid etc. And further, 'to do and transact all such

other matters as may appertain thereto.' I cannot doubt that this includes the right to address a Memorandum to the representatives of the four Great Powers which are considering the Treaty with Turkey.

"(2) On January 20th 1919 it was decided in Paris at a meeting of the British Delegation at which you presided as follows: 'The British Empire Delegation agreed that the Dominions and India, coming in the category of States with particular interests, are entitled to put forward memoranda for the Peace Conference.' It is this decision which I now ask to be allowed to carry out. . . .

"Sir Maurice Hankey tells me that you decided that it was for you, as senior British representative, to represent the British case as a whole, and that it would not be in order for the Indian Delegation to address the Peace Conference direct. My recollection, recorded at the time, is different. I withdrew a request that a previous memorandum of mine on the subject of Adrianople should be forwarded to the Peace Conference because he informed me that you would convey to the Peace Conference the arguments of the Indian Delegation. It would be inconceivable that you could have reversed the decision of the British Empire Delegation, thus depriving the Dominions and India of the position given them in respect of the German Treaty, as States with particular interests. Unless I can exercise the right conferred upon me to forward my views to the Peace Conference, which seems to be proceeding on data which are controversial to say the least of it, India will not have had an opportunity of having her case considered by the present representatives of France, Italy and Japan. . . .

"It is useless to discuss the matter at a Cabinet in London in your absence whilst the decision is being taken at San Remo. I am sure you will see that it is my bounden duty to ensure that India enjoys the International Status which was promised her, and that her views are properly represented regarding a Peace vitally concerning her interests."

To this letter Lloyd George on 25 April 1920, sent from San Remo a long, temperate and (to my mind) convincing reply. He pointed out that Montagu's contention implied that everyone of the five British Plenipotentiaries would have the right to submit to the Peace Conference conflicting memoranda as represen-



ting the views of His Majesty's Government. India's views had been fully and frequently stated and India had received preferential treatment as regards the opportunity to present her views; but it was absurd that a member of the British Cabinet should appear before the Peace Conference to oppose the rest of the Cabinet. "In fact", Lloyd George wrote, "throughout the Conference your attitude has often struck me as being not so much that of a member of the British Cabinet, but of a successor on the throne of Aurungzeb. . . I am not sure that in your advocacy of the case as viewed by yourself, you have not given encouragement to an agitation in India which, if it were to continue, might undermine the edifice of Indian Government which you have so carefully reared."

Montagu accepted the Prime Minister's decision, but did so in a controversial reply. He claimed that his position on behalf of India was similar to that of Hughes on behalf of Australia, although he recognised the difficulties of his dual capacity. It was the disappearance of President Wilson, Clemenceau and Orlando which led him to ask for a further hearing. He was not pro-Turkish, his concern was "to present a case on behalf of that part of the British Empire for whom I am responsible and whose peace and well-being may be so profoundly affected by the decisions taken."

In November 1920 the fall of Venizelos, led to intense agitation in India. Therefore Montagu once again drew attention to the very serious situation, and urged that, now that the Greece for whose benefit the Treaty of Sèvres was made had disappeared and Mustapha Kemal was receiving support in France and Italy, we must get on better terms to counter the increasing menace of Bolshevik propaganda.

But, though it seemed so clear to Montagu that the Treaty of Sèvres must be revised, both Lloyd George and Curzon were most reluctant to do so. On 2 December 1920 Lloyd George said to the inter-Allied Conference which was then sitting that "quite frankly he did not himself believe in the Turk, who . . . was the curse of every land on which he had laid his hand. The powers would be degrading themselves and civilisation also if they forced back under Turkish rule any of the lands which had recently been freed from Ottoman maladministration . . . If Greeks themselves

liked to allow the Turk to go back into Thrace and Smyrna, then the responsibility and the infamy for the consequences must rest with them.”<sup>2</sup>

In February 1921, an inter-Allied Conference was held in London. Montagu urged that the system of meticulous controls over Turkey which had been elaborated in Whitehall should be lightened. He also suggested a plebiscite in Thrace and at Adrianople, if it could not be returned to the Turks, a Turkish administration under Greek sovereignty.

On 11 March 1921 Montagu, having seen the terms suggested by the Conference, wrote to Lloyd George:

“I have just seen the terms which you propose to hand to the Turks. It is no use my disguising from you my profound disappointment and my extreme apprehension that, unless the Allies can do more than this, Peace is impossible in Turkey, in the whole of the Middle East, in Afghanistan and in India . . . As regards Afghanistan, I am perfectly certain the Afghans would throw over the Bolsheviks to-morrow if friendship could be shown for Islam by Great Britain. As regards India, Lord Reading would convince you, if I cannot, that, now that the Reforms are working, if the Turkish Treaty could be satisfyingly settled, *there is every prospect of profound peace and the cessation of all our troubles.*”

He detailed the changes in the Treaty which he regarded as essential, and concluded “I know I have been an endless worry to you on this Treaty. This is my last chance. I regret that I never saw these proposals till to-day. I make my comments at the last moment. On your reply depends peace from Adrianople to Rangoon.”

Montagu followed this up with another letter the same day.

“I sent you a letter this morning in great haste. I feel that I did not make it plain that I was not ungrateful for all the patience and care with which you were striving to get Peace in the East, and some of my language was ungenerous . . . Do not think me ungrateful or wanting in confidence.”

But Lloyd George, far from listening to this plea, had on 18 and 19 March seen Greek Ministers in London, approved of

<sup>2</sup> *Documents on British Foreign Policy, 1919-1939, First series, vol. VIII, 1920.*



their making an advance against the Turks and encouraged them to hope to raise money in England. On 5 April 1921 Curzon told Montagu that "so far as the F.O. is concerned, we have had nothing whatever to do with the Greeks' advance which I consider a great mistake and have deprecated from the start . . . That they have received encouragement in another quarter I believe to be certain. But I was never told of this and heartily disapprove of it."

Montagu told Reading that there were strong dissensions in the Cabinet. The tension is illustrated in the following letter to Curzon:

"23 June 1921.

"I feel I owe it to you to offer some apology for the heat in the Cabinet last night. I can only plead as an excuse that I was very nearly as tired as you were after our prolonged sittings, and that I do attach enormous importance to informal talks with the Turks. I am quite convinced that stately messages do not impress them as conversation does. However, I recognise that you have made great progress and I did not in the least mean to convey lack of appreciation of the services rendered in Paris."

Curzon replied:

"I am obliged for your kind words about yesterday. I think that what causes me some annoyance is when some of my colleagues, not always famous for the soundness of their advice in the past (I am of course not referring to you) and not possessing a profound or prolonged acquaintance with the East, insist upon telling me how I ought to conduct my business. I really wonder if I were to hector Winston about addressing Feisal in the way in which he attempts to dictate to me, what he would say! After all this is a Foreign Office business, and some weight must be attached to every opinion which we get from our men on the spot, particularly if I find that I am largely in agreement with them myself. You are rather apt to assume that Mustapha Kemal is an innocent and injured individual burning to explain his grievances and to protest his excellent intentions to a Government that has been so stupid as to misunderstand him. It is also conceivable that he may be an astute Oriental, a past master in every move of the game, who only wants to confuse and divide."

In October 1921, Reading, who had now been Viceroy for six months gave to Montagu's pleas the most forceful support. The Moslem agitation, he telegraphed, was the dominant factor of Indian politics. . . "With all the earnestness that I can command I would impress upon (Ministers) the vast importance to India, and consequently to the Empire of the restoration of our influence with Moslems in India."

Montagu sent this to the Prime Minister, saying: "I have voiced my views so long and so unsuccessfully on this subject that I despair of making any impression on my colleagues by a reiteration of arguments. Lord Reading comes fresh to the situation and does not, I think, exaggerate in any degree the difficulties caused to India by British Foreign policy."

In the light of after events the case for restoring Smyrna and Thrace to Turkey seems incontrovertible. But it must be remembered that a military stalemate prevailed between Greece and Turkey and it no doubt seemed bad tactics to promise concessions to Turkey which could not be enforced upon the Greeks unless and until they suffered a military defeat. Tactics apart, the Allies had in the Treaty of Sèvres made promises to Greece which, even after the fall of Venizelos, could not properly be ignored by making unilateral concessions to please Indian Mohammedans.

But to Montagu his case seemed overwhelmingly right and Curzon's opposition made him angrier and angrier. During a Cabinet meeting on 22 November 1921 Montagu sarcastically remarked that Curzon was so convinced as to what the Mohammedans of India ought to think that it angered him to learn what they did think.

"I do not know", Curzon wrote, "what impelled you to make a wholly unprovoked and, as the Prime Minister remarked, unfounded attack upon me at Cabinet this afternoon. It was all the more unjustified because during the past three years I have written you scores of letters in reply to appeals from you endeavouring to find formulas or to present facts with which you could assuage the wrath of Indian officials. I have noted on several occasions these appeals for private assistance are compatible with great asperity of tone and pronounced hostility in Cabinet."

Montagu drafted an emotional reply: "Your letter wounds me deeply and above all I resent the suggestion that I have asked



you to take time from your work to devote to mine . . . I have written very frankly and, although your letter was an angry one and provoked in me a great feeling of wrong and hurt, I have endeavoured to write with restraint." But the reply actually sent was calmer. Montagu explained that he had expected his remark to be taken as a piece of banter: as it had caused offence, he was sorry. He went on to say how useful had been his close association with Curzon on Afghanistan. "Would it not be possible to institute some similar cooperation on other matters in order to avoid differences in Cabinet? Curzon sent a conciliatory reply; he agreed that more cooperation would be a good thing. "The difficulty that I at least find is how and where to arrange for it in a life of ceaseless engagement and toil. The work of F.O. is positively crushing."

On 13 January 1922 Montagu wrote to Churchill a moving defence of his political career which was so soon to end:

"My dear Winston,

"The few words which you spoke to me on leaving me tonight make me venture as in virtue of our friendship to tell you that hardly a moment that I have to myself is not spent in worrying about these considerations. Of course I am soaked in the matter. You but naturally look at the facts as they seem at large and give me a conclusion which I have not the slightest doubt is even largely shared, if not by all, by some of my colleagues. Out of the ten years that you describe, I have been at the India Office something like  $8\frac{1}{2}$ . You know how sensitive I am, and you can easily imagine how often I have put the same conclusion to myself. Nevertheless I am positive that on any other policy the situation would have been incalculably worse, and the very things that are disturbing us now might have occurred during the war when India was denuded of troops. Nothing is so troublesome in an Oriental country as the growth of a thinking public opinion. I am not responsible for the fact that we have in India almost every century development from the 22nd to the 1st. Lord Macaulay and his successors are responsible for that; and there are in India those who can alone interpret Einstein walking about among those who worship stones and run about naked. Ireland, Russia, England, all give examples to be imitated and yet I can only say that with

all the shortcomings of the policy and the circumstances, with all the difficulties of finding the right man for your agency, I am still convinced that things are better than they could have been on any other plan, and that we can win through, and will win through, if it is allowed to go on. It may well be that public opinion and those who guide it will demand a change, and the change may produce relief for the moment with a terrible result in the long run. But I can only express an opinion. I cannot force anybody to accept it. And there is all the time another point that I cannot force anybody to accept, although it is held by the strongest opponents of my policy. If only we could take the lead in genuinely rehabilitating Turkey, if only we could take the lead in winning the good will of the Turks, instead of allowing ourselves to be dragged at the heels of France, in forcing Turkey to a reluctant peace, I believe you would be startled by the improvement in the Indian situation. Now the French crisis has delayed any near possibility of this taking place, and I have great doubts whether with the present Prime Minister and the present Foreign Secretary anything could achieve it. But it is rather cruel that my policy has to take in its stride, and to be judged according to the measure of its success in dealing with, the British policy in the Middle East, which to my mind serves no British end at all."



## CHAPTER XVIII

### *Gandhi is Worshipped (1921)*

THE YEAR 1921, the first year of the operation of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms, should have been one of triumph for Montagu who had for nearly four years devoted such immense labour to devising the scheme, getting Cabinet approval and piloting the Bill through the Joint Committee and Parliament. In fact the year 1921 was a year of triumph for Gandhi who used his unrivalled talents as a demagogue to spread throughout the millions of India the Gandhi-worship which his saintly character attracted. Under the strain of overwork and depression as the result of the Treaty of Sèvres, the vendetta of the pro-Dyer die-hards, the imperial Conference and agitation and sedition in India, Montagu's relations with Lloyd George and Curzon deteriorated. On the other hand, Chelmsford's replacement by Reading in April 1921 was a great relief and his friendship with Reading, as well as with Willingdon at Madras and George Lloyd at Bombay, remained unbroken.

Montagu, in a letter to Willingdon of 16 February 1921 still very dubiously hoped that non-cooperation was so impracticable that it would not last.

"The situation in India puzzles me. Spoor [Labour M.P.] has just returned. His views are interesting, but they amount to this. The situation is very serious. Gandhi is worshipped. His influence cannot be over-estimated. Hardly anybody in India wants separation from Great Britain. Nobody in India, European or Indian, thinks it would be wise to touch Gandhi. To this general summary he adds that if only something dramatic was done all would be well. I am so tired of hearing this. The pronouncement of 20th August [1917] was going to set everything right. The Reforms would set everything right, and so on. India cannot have something dramatic once a month. If only Government would repudiate the Punjab affair. Good God! It has done so not once but a hundred

times. The Duke of Connaught has done it, and still they want it repudiated again. Meanwhile non-cooperation appears to be getting more dangerous, but I must leave it to people in India to decide how to deal with it. I never thought that it would die of inanition. What I do think is that perhaps, and I speak with great diffidence, it is so impracticable and so disadvantageous that people will get sick of it. For instance, the National Schools, started with such a flourish of trumpets—you can get isolated subscriptions I have no doubt, and pretty considerable ones, but will they go on subscribing? You can stay out of the Councils, but when you see the power that the Councils have, will you not very much regret that you are not in it. And if the Councils are criticised will not our answer be easy: 'Go into the Councils and put them right.' Montagu added 'I am delighted with Rufus. We spend much of the day together. No one can say who is going to make a good Viceroy, but one can confidently predict that Rufus ought to make a good one.'"

Montagu wrote an affectionate farewell letter to Chelmsford. He had become very unpopular with Indians and the affectionate letter was a kindly act; the letter ended as follows:

"So ends the Chelmsford-Montagu period of Indian history. Not only can it be said that you have done your best, but it can also be said that that best was of great profit to India. I am delighted to think that we shall still be brought into contact through the Joint Committee, and I am still more delighted to think that in a few weeks' time now, I shall have the joy of grasping you by the hand."

On 20 April 1921 Montagu wrote to Reading: "I had a long talk with Chelmsford this afternoon. He was courteous and subdued. But he is a curious fellow. He studiously refrained from expressing any personal opinions. There was no trace of cordiality, criticism or antagonism at any moment. It was just rather sloppy ice."

A misunderstanding arose with Curzon about Egypt. Curzon had sent a telegram to say that the concessions offered to Adly Pasha represented a decision of the Cabinet which he had not secured



without much difficulty and was the utmost limit of concession to which H. M. Government was prepared to go. Montagu—since he himself favoured further concessions, if necessary—objected to this phrase as inconsistent with the collective responsibility of the Cabinet. Curzon replied on 1 April 1921: “Dear Montagu, I am afraid you are the one of my colleagues to whom I am least successful in giving satisfaction. For whenever I pen a telegram or write a despatch, I have an uneasy fear that either in a note to the Cabinet or in a letter to myself you will somehow or other find cause for complaint.” Montagu replied on 4 April 1921:

“My dear Curzon, your letter with its sweeping complaints and generalisation staggers me. I cannot think that it reflects more than a moment of irritation, for it is so out of harmony with the patient spirit in which you have conducted controversies in which we found ourselves on opposing sides, and with the generous expression of appreciation which you have on very many occasions expressed. I must express regret that you pen telegrams and write despatches under such needless apprehension, for our controversies have been remarkably few, and our differences have been speedily adjusted. However, I must leave that for the moment with the painful reflections inevitable from your harsh censure. I cannot pledge myself to desist from expressing my views to the Cabinet.”

But these storms in a tea-cup, though eventually fatal to Montagu were dwarfed by larger tempests. Montagu wrote to Reading on 7 April 1921:

“At the moment of writing, nobody quite knows whether we are just on the eve of a great industrial upheaval or not. The fact of the matter is that the Government view the possibility of an upheaval of incalculable dimensions with a certain grim determination, but with no undue optimism. Denuded of troops as we are, we proceed to perfect our organisation to cope with it. Greater anxiety seems to me to be expressed by the Labour people. On the one hand, I think they recognise that revolutions in all countries are nearly always the work of a small minority. On the other hand, they hope, and perhaps with some reason, that very shortly there will be a Labour Government, and they look with some concern at

the possible destruction of the machine which they so soon hope to control. Therefore, every time we get further information of a dangerous situation, it is Labour which is most apprehensive of the possible results."

In the midst of these preoccupations, in April 1921, Montagu became involved in the Budget and the Reparations problem.

The situation is reported in a letter to Ronaldshay of 12 May 1921.

"I have had a hectic time with reparations, and worked day and night at arriving at the scheme which has now been accepted by Germany. The whole matter has been a triumph for Great Britain, and mainly for the Prime Minister. We did our best to keep the French out of the Ruhr and we succeeded. I am now up to the eyes in the industrial situation. That is the life we lead. As for Ireland and the coal strike, there is just a ray of hope in the first and something, I trust, more like dawn in the second."

On the same day Montagu wrote to Reading:

"To anybody who understands political economy, or pretends to, nothing is so disgusting as the Anti-Dumping Bill now going through the House of Commons . . . I have got to grin and bear it, but it does disgust one with political life to know that we Liberals in the Government have got to defend this Bill and that even the Conservative leaders realise that it is ridiculous but have got to play up to their man. Asquith made the best speech yesterday that he has made since his return to the House—vigorous, humorous, incisive, splendid. I felt myself in cordial agreement with everything he said, and went dismally into the Division Lobby against him."

Turning to India Office affairs Montagu wrote:

"I am also having a busy time in my Office. Once when [Sir John] Maffey was over here he told me that he had never been in the India Office since he had signed the Covenant on his appointment to the Indian Civil Service. I wrote to Chelmsford accordingly, and told him that I was always glad to see officers on



leave. I thought that the result of this request or suggestion would be that he and members of his Government and Local Governments would give introductions to me to people proceeding on leave who it was thought might have something to say or who might on their part like to see me. No, no! Nothing can be done in India except by rule, regulation, code or resolution, and accordingly a solemn circular was issued to every member of the Indian Civil Service telling them that they were expected to call at the India Office when they were on leave. I think this is one of the most idiotic things that I can remember. It is not a trifling matter; I am not sure there was not a tinge of malice in it on somebody's part. Anyhow, the thing is in full blast now, and I am determined to find time, even working till midnight, to see anybody who asks for an interview."

Montagu was much worried by the dissatisfaction of the Indian Civil Service with their pay. Though Indians complained that the European services were too expensive, the Services were convinced that they were not adequately paid. Montagu suggested a Conference with the Services to discuss the difficulties frankly and Whitley Councils, which had recently become fashionable in the United Kingdom.

Reading fully shared Montagu's desire to improve the pay of the Indian Civil Service, but was convinced that the Indian members of the Legislative Assembly would refuse to approve the expenditure required and was naturally not willing to 'certify' this expenditure and thus flout Indian views and make the I.C.S. still more unpopular.

In May 1921 Reading had a series of interviews with Gandhi and in a letter to Montagu Lady Reading gave an interesting account of her impressions of these interviews.

"The excitement of the week has been Gandhi's visits, very frequent, very lengthy.

"I hear the sort of view of his intimate associates is that Rufus is a visitant from another plane!

"In all other instances they have felt themselves at least the equal in debate and now they have come up against someone who makes them feel like children. All this is done, they allow, with infinite courtesy.

“They pay tribute to his sincerity of purpose.

“I hope and believe that the time will come when Rufus will look back on the last ten days as being the turning point and from this moment he will gain the ascendancy.”

The problem which faced Reading in India presented the same dilemmas as the 1914 problem in Ulster and as the present day (1960) problems in Africa. Indians had been taught by our history and our example to desire passionately to be free and self-governing. They could not achieve this by their votes, for they had no votes, but only by agitation. It seemed therefore reasonable for the Viceroy to have discussions with the agitators to persuade them of the genuineness of our desire to enable India to achieve self-government as soon as Indians were competent to govern themselves but what the Indian Home Rulers wanted was to get rid of the English at once and their avowed policy was by “non-cooperation” to make it impossible for the existing government to be carried on. They were rebels whose object was to destroy law and order.

Thus many people—including progressive people such as Willingdon as well as “die-hards” such as O’Dwyer and Sydenham—thought that the first duty of the Government of India must be to maintain law and order and that Gandhi and other “non-cooperators” should be locked up in prison and not invited to long and friendly talks. But Gandhi continued to preach that non-cooperation should be non-violent in character and when mobs, worked up to a state of passionate enthusiasm, disobeyed him and took part in riots, burning of property and murder, Gandhi threatened to starve himself to death in protest.

It seemed difficult to choose the right moment to arrest Gandhi, all the more that it was feared that he would become a martyr and widespread disorder would result. Indeed it seemed likely that Gandhi wished to be arrested, so as to share the fate of the Mohammedan agitators and maintain Hindu-Mahomedan unity in the Home Rule campaign.

For many months the Government of India refrained from arresting Gandhi and when the visit of the Prince of Wales drew near, this was a strong additional reason for postponing the day of Gandhi’s arrest. Montagu’s consistent policy was to leave such



decisions entirely to the Government of India and the Provincial Governments, but the responsibility was his and he was widely blamed for the failure to arrest Gandhi, whom he had once so unluckily described as his friend.

On 8 June 1921 Montagu wrote to George Lloyd a melancholy letter, speaking of "these days, when there is no pleasure in politics."

In June and July 1921 the Imperial Conference added to Montagu's other problems. The Conference discussed the position of Indians in South Africa. General Smuts was not in a position to make any concession and he was supported by Sir Winston Churchill who, as Colonial Secretary was responsible for the refusal to allow Indians to hold land in the Uplands of Kenya. From the middle of June 1921 to the end of July various conferences and conversations failed to find a solution. On 2 August after an eloquent appeal by the Prime Minister, the Conference passed a resolution that the rights of resident Indians to citizenship should be recognised, with a statement by South Africa that it could not accept the resolution and a statement by India expressing its profound concern at the position of Indians in South Africa and the hope that by negotiation a more satisfactory position would soon be reached.

As regards Kenya, it was eventually decided to await discussion with Lord Delamere, representing the Kenya settlers, before taking the case to the Cabinet. An Indian Delegation was also appointed. Matters were at this stage, when it was announced that Winston Churchill was to address the Kenya dinner on 27 January 1922. Montagu reminded him that they had still to agree, or failing that, to go to the Cabinet, and trusted that Churchill would say nothing to indicate that there were discussions in the Cabinet. This warning was ignored and the next day Montagu sent a long and vigorous protest. Churchill had said that we were pledged to reserve the Highlands of East Africa for European settlers.

"I would ask you," Montagu wrote, "how you can possibly harmonise this announcement with the usual conduct of a Cabinet Minister? I do not know what you mean by 'we', but I assume you mean H. M.'s Government. But you surely cannot deny that this matter has been specifically reserved by us throughout long months for ultimate decision by the Cabinet in case we could not come to an agreement and that the Cabinet has never considered it. You

must know that I do not accept, and cannot accept and never have accepted, your interpretation of the pledges given in the past.”

He added: “You go on to say in your speech that all future immigration of Indians should be strictly limited. Again this fills me with amazement. I do not in the least know how you can harmonise this sentence with your acceptance of equal rights for civilised men or how it can be harmonised with acceptance by H. M. Government of the resolution of the Imperial Conference last year.” To this Sir Winston Churchill merely replied: “I am sorry to receive your long scolding letter. . . I really do not think you have any cause for complaint.”

On 28 June 1921 Montagu wrote a letter to Ronaldshay on his favourite thesis that the Government of India must learn to explain itself by adequate publicity and propaganda. “Just at the moment,” he continued, “there are three things outside India which fill one’s thoughts; the Imperial Conference, Ireland and the coal strike. The first is going well so far though exhaustingly to one who, like myself, has to take part in it over and above the ordinary day’s work. But there are opportunities in it which must not be missed and may, if we can handle them, give us real help over matters of real concern to India, notably emigration and the Turkish Peace Settlement.”

On 14 July 1921 Montagu reported to Reading: “We are all very restive, especially Winston.”

“Politics”, he wrote, “are in an unhappy condition in this country. Peace with Ireland looks promising. Relations with America look better. But I think we are handling Egypt and the Near East shockingly badly. In domestic politics we have the unpleasant spectacle of a Government elected on a home for heroes and a new world platform drifting into a non-expenditure and anti-waste attitude. Promises last as short a time as pie-crust. Acts are repealed almost before the King has put his signature to them. We are all very restive, especially Winston.”

In a letter of 21 July 1921 Montagu tentatively suggested that he should visit India.



To Lord Reading.

“This Imperial Conference, gloomy as you know it to be from the Indian point of view, takes up nearly all my time; but I ought to be happy because at this moment it looks as if the Irish settlement was going to be reached. . . .

“Rufus, don’t take me too seriously, and on the other hand don’t take me too lightly, when I say quite privately to you, that I am terribly tempted to come out and see you this winter. If it were not that the Prince of Wales is coming, I should certainly ask you to invite me. I believe that we shall have to make new plans, and I do not see how we are to make them without conferring together.”

As the Greeks for the moment gained the upper hand over the Turks, Montagu’s resentment at Lloyd George increased. He wrote on 15 September 1921 to Reading:

“A letter which means peace or war in Ireland is on its way. God knows what is going to happen. Meanwhile the great Prime Minister becomes greater every day. He is delighted with himself at the defeat of the Turks. What foresight he showed! How great is Venizelos! How contemptible are the Military advisers on the General Staff! What brutes the Turks are! How eminently desirable it is that the Government of India should be firm! All the time I feel that it is a thousand pities for India that the Prime Minister has not a little more confidence in his Secretary of State, and how bad a thing it is for India that the Secretary of State has so little confidence in the Prime Minister, so far as India is concerned. However, I am bound to say that up to the moment anyhow, he has handled Ireland superlatively during the negotiations, and he has not interfered so far as India is concerned.”

During September and October 1921 Montagu was able to take things somewhat more easily. He wrote to Willingdon on 27 October: “You must not think that I have had two months clear holiday interrupted only by the day on which I wrote to you last. It is true I have had, and greedily seized, the opportunity of getting away from this despicable town more often than when things are

in full blast. Whether I am in the Office or away, I have to read and think and decide and generally worry myself to death; the only thing I cannot do is write, because I have not got the machinery or a fair chance of collecting myself."

Montagu wrote to Reading on 30 November 1921:

"Politics here at home are in an awful state. We are governed by the Prime Minister who has confidence only in Chamberlain, F. E. and Horne and carries with him Winston because of the necessity of doing so. F. E. has become a very much larger figure of recent months and is really the Prime Minister's right hand man. The Cabinet is hardly ever called together and then only to register decisions. Everything that wants doing is given to one of these people to do; and if you want evidence as to my partiality for your subjects, I am told I care for no political question except Turkey! I have not seen a single one of my colleagues this week and in all probability I shall not. There is one source of profound satisfaction that I have a job to which I am devoted and it is so absorbingly interesting and engrossing that the hideous misrepresentations, the absence of all support from colleagues, from Englishmen or from Indians, makes the waves of pessimism supportable and replaces them by moments of exhilaration produced by sheer excitement of interesting work."

The visit of the Prince of Wales began in November 1921. Willingdon had considered that, in view of the widespread anti-British agitation, it should be postponed, but this would clearly have been very difficult. The visit was a cause of great anxiety to the Government and many unfortunate incidents took place. The Prince himself characteristically objected to the attempts made by the Press to exaggerate successful events and to camouflage failure. He wrote the following letter to Montagu on January 1, 1922.

"R. M. S. Dufferin,  
"At Sea  
"January 1st, 1922

"Dear Mr. Montagu,

"I thank you for your letter of 1st December. I should in any case have written to you about this time, which marks the com-



pletion of a lap in my tour. I am nearly half-way through now, and feel that it is only right that you should have my impressions of present-day India, and my views as to the utility and results of this tour.

“Let me tell you at once that the newspaper accounts at home of the various visits, ceremonies and receptions have almost invariably been hopelessly exaggerated, and reading these accounts from this end I feel that camouflage is almost invariably the dominant feature.

“Naturally I deplore this, as I cannot bear to think that people at home are being given a wrong impression, which they most certainly are. They think my tour is a success, and I must reluctantly tell you that it is no such thing.

“As I do not wish to trouble you with a long screed, I feel I cannot do better than to enclose a copy of a letter that I wrote to the Viceroy from Calcutta. I am afraid that he will not find it pleasant reading, and it may read worse for you. But I feel it is only fair on you and the Viceroy that you should both learn the truth from the man who is taking the leading part in this tour.

“I sincerely hope for your sake that you will have received similar reports from people you can trust, and that this letter of mine will not be the first intimation that this tour is by no means the triumphal progress that it is reported to be at home by the newspapers. I can assure you that my impressions of India are not merely based on the absence of crowds in the streets or the non-attendance of students at futile university ceremonies.

“I make it my business to talk to as many of our people out here as I can—soldiers, civil servants, and, more especially the police who, from the nature of their work, can usually give a more accurate picture of the whole situation out here than anyone else; and as regards the present conditions of life in India they one and all say the same thing—That they won’t let their sons come out here to earn their living in the Indian Army, Indian Civil Service etc. etc. and that not now would they even recommend these services to any good fellow. The reason for this is, that India is no longer a place for a white man to live in.

“I am sorry to have to paint you such a gloomy picture, but I cannot refrain from doing so, as I know that, as Secretary of State you want to, and should, know the truth. At the same time, I

thank you for the kind things you have said in your letter to me, which I very much appreciate. And, as I have said to the Viceroy, I am not hating this tour from a personal point of view. All our people are very kind, and give me as much riding and polo as I want, and I have had very good sport shooting in the native States. I should be grateful for another letter, and with the best wishes for 1922.

“I remain,  
“Yours sincerely,  
“(Sd) Edward P.”

*Enclosure*

“Government House  
“Calcutta  
“28th December 1921

“Dear Lord Reading,

“I am very sorry indeed to have just missed you here and much regret that I have no opportunity of a good talk with you just now. I am nearly half-way through my tour, and there is a great deal that I want to tell you, and as soon as possible. So, as there is no chance of a talk, I am afraid I will have to inflict a long letter on you; I know how very busy you must be, but I hope you will forgive me.

“I must tell you at once that I am not at all happy about the results of the tour as far as it has gone. £25,000 of English money and goodness knows how many lakhs of rupees are being spent over it, and I must honestly say that I have not as yet been able to justify that vast expenditure.

“The ostensible reason for my coming to India was to see as many of the natives as possible and to get as near to them as I could. At least, I presume it was the main reason, and I looked upon that as my duty. Well, I am afraid that I have not had many opportunities of doing this, either in British India or in the Native States.

“I will not discuss the Native States because they are not our show, and I will confine myself to my experience in British India. Of course you know only too well how much my visits to British Indian cities have been boycotted by Gandhi and his disciples,



and it has been obvious to me that the non-cooperators have prevented thousands of natives from turning out to see me. You will no doubt have had reports from Bombay, Poona, Ajmer, Lucknow, Allahabad, Benares and Patna. The cases of each have been the same—hartals and more or less emptied streets.

“I do not worry so much about the native populations ignoring my visits to their cities, because only very few of them understand, and given the smallest lead, they follow like sheep; but I must say I was very angry and felt very insulted when at the University of Lucknow, Allahabad and Benares practically all the students (in the case of Allahabad *all* the students) refused to meet me or to attend the university functions. At Benares it was quite a big ceremony, conferring of honorary degrees etc. and it would have been humorous if it had not been so sad this way they tried to “kid” me by filling up the empty students seats with High School boys, boys scouts and Europeans. I suppose they hoped I would never get to hear of what had been done, or realise what a b.f. they had made of me ! ! ! !

“So much for the non-cooperators. Now as regards the police and the hopelessly exaggerated police precautions which surround me and do not give me a chance. No one realises more than I do that precautions are necessary, and that the Indian police is a grand force which has had a very hard time the last few years and which has rendered magnificent services. I have talked to and congratulated many of the officers and native other ranks of the I.P., and no one admires them more than I do. They take their responsibilities very much to heart, but I think nearly all of them feel that the protection is overdone, though none of them would dare relax the precautions, even if I asked them to, because of the very strict orders they have from Delhi.

“I do realise that it is a responsibility for you and your Government to have a Prince of Wales touring India at such a critical and disturbed time, and I sympathise with you and do understand people having the wind up a bit. But surely it is better to take a few risks and so give this tour a chance of being even of only a little use than to carry on as I am now doing.

“I am hardly ever allowed even to drive through the Bazaars and native quarters of the cities, and the crowds if there ever are any, lining the routes through the European quarters are herded

together like sheep and guarded by constables who face the crowds (with their backs to me) so as to watch them. In my opinion, such severe police tactics can scarcely be conducive to encouraging even loyal natives to come and see me.

“I have been five days in Calcutta, and I must say that I am agreeably surprised at the reception which has been accorded to me by the Indians. On my arrival on Saturday there was quite a fair sprinkling of Indians on the route to Government House certainly more than I ever expected, and, I think, more than anybody here expected. To compare it with Bombay is very hard, but, if anything, I should say there were more than in Bombay. On Saturday afternoon I attended to races, where there were very few; but on Monday when I went to the races in semi-state there was quite a good attendance, and as far as I could judge the reception was very good. Yesterday I attended the public entertainment on the Maidan, and there was a very good attendance there; and similarly to-day, there was quite a lot of Indians on the route to the opening of the Victoria Memorial; but when one comes to realise the enormous population of Calcutta, the numbers I have seen are very, very small.

“I feel sure you will agree with me when I say that it is a great pleasure to work hard on a tour like this provided one can always feel that one is doing some good to the Empire, but it makes it desperately hard and a real worry and anxiety if one has a constant feeling that the money and the time are being absolutely wasted. I am not at all sure that a tour of this kind that does not carry success is not worse for the Empire in the long run than no tour at all.

“My one delight is that wherever I have been in India, I have had a magnificent reception from the British people and both British and native soldiers, so that in that respect I feel that I am doing a little good. I am fully aware of the hard times that all British in this country are going through at the present time, and if I can help them only a little I feel that anyhow something has been achieved.

“It was a great pleasure to me to present your Cup to the winner at the races on Monday, and you would have been pleased to hear the cheers which were given for you after the Cup had been given away.



"I am very much looking forward to seeing you in February.

"With my kindest regards to Lady Reading and yourself,

"Believe me,

"Yours sincerely,

"(Sd) David P."

Montagu replied by suggesting that the Prince of Wales might have exaggerated the coldness of his welcome in Bombay, Poona and Calcutta, since a member of the Prince's Staff had reported that his welcome in these cities had been even warmer than his welcome in Australia. Montagu explained that Indian crowds were habitually silent. As regards the Civil Service, it was always their tradition to grumble.

"Please believe me," he continued, "when I say that I do not underestimate their difficulties and troubles. I have never been able to convey to them how much I sympathise with them, and I know that their task is made the more difficult by the campaign of misrepresentation and calumny which would lead them to believe that they cannot be sure of support from the Government of India—at home or in India. Of course it is easy to see their troubles. A population wholly ignorant and uneducated is far easier to deal with than a population which contains elements at any rate with political aspirations, moved and stirred by world conditions. They have to do their daily work in a chorus of calumny, misrepresentation and abuse, and the seriousness of their position is aggravated, apart from the complexity and difficulty of their task, by financial stringency which we would be only too glad to remedy or alleviate if it were not for the grave financial position in which India, not unlike other countries, finds herself involved to-day. Not a day passes but what I spend a part of it in trying to think if some step to take to help them, and I know that Reading is in the same position. But, Sir, I notice in your letter to the Viceroy that you realise the tremendous inspiration and encouragement it is to them to see you and to cheer you; how it inspires them to fresh effort, and how great is the boon that you have conferred upon them by your presence. You realise to some degree, I believe, that this is inestimable.

"Then, too, it is not only that. Think of the heartening effect upon

the loyal population of your visit, of your courage, of your personality. Think how it heartens them to withstand the seductions and the disloyalty of the extremists, and then think of the Indian soldiers and of the Princes. To concentrate and to inspire the forces on our side in order that they may stand by us in doing what is after all their battle with those who would land their country in disaster and chaos is a great result. I am really satisfied, even after reading your letter, that you must not be led to under-estimate these effects.

“I know it must have crossed your mind from time to time in the inevitable moments of reaction and fatigue, to wonder why we asked you to expose yourself to this. I feel sure, Sir, the argument is familiar to you, but let me repeat it. It was not only an easily intelligible desire that His Majesty’s Royal promise should be kept; it was not only because we thought of the effect throughout the world if we let it be believed that the conditions of India were such that the Heir Apparent to the Indian throne could not visit the Indian Empire; it was not only because we conceived that the highest Imperial interests made it essential that we should not countenance the disloyal resolutions and feelings of the extremists; but it was because, and particularly at difficult times it was thought right that those who govern and those who are governed in His Majesty’s name, should be inspired by a visit from the most popular Prince in the world. I do not under-estimate the troubles and difficulties in India to-day, but I believe in the country as it has been made and moulded by British effort, and I believe that if we pursue our purpose firmly, keep our promises, support our friends and help them against our enemies, we shall win through to more peaceful times and that Your Royal Highness’s visit will have helped infinitely more to this end than Your Royal Highness was inclined to believe.

“I look forward with great anticipation to another letter from you which I hope may be equally true and brighter. I follow your every movement from day to day, rejoice with you in the fun, and feel a loyal indignation at the unavailing insults which have been offered to you.”

By February 1922, the problem of maintaining law and order had come to overshadow all others. Though Montagu had so bitterly denounced “O’Dwyerism” and maintained that rule must



be founded on partnership and not on mere force, the prevalence of rioting and assassination and above all the sweeping success of Gandhi and non-cooperation, had led him to write to Reading on 1 February 1922.

“I do not know what the future of India will be and how we shall get through our new troubles. I am convinced they would have been much worse if it had not been for reforms and I suppose some way out will be found eventually. In the meantime, it looks to me as if there was nothing for it but a vigorous attempt to smash the organisation against us and to deal with sedition wherever it shows itself. That is the opinion here and it looks as if it is the opinion growing in India . . . I am rather pessimistic and think that force will have to go on for some time before talk is possible.”

But, even so, Montagu threw out various constructive ideas—a more scientific Intelligence Service, a gendarmerie to keep order in place of the army, and better treatment of political prisoners.

“I should like, in effect”, Montagu wrote, “for the Judges to say to Gandhi and people like him, C. R. Das and the others, ‘My dear man, there comes a moment in a propaganda like yours when those who are responsible for the good government of the country must deal with it and stop it. We have the highest respect for your motives; but you are going to be put in a very comfortable house where you will not be allowed to take any further part in politics until you tell me that you are prepared to cease any kind of challenge to Government.’ I should like to see these men treated with the most perfect respect, but unable to get back to activities, and not humiliated by a sentence equal to the sentence of hard labour in this country and acquaintance with prison walls.

“... Don’t dismiss these thoughts as the thoughts of a radical doctrinaire. I find that they are widely shared in this country and Winston, who is the most convinced advocate of the theory that all India needs at the moment is repression of disorder, is bombarding me with suggestions in this subject.”

Meanwhile Montagu had to recognise that British opinion had, owing to the disorders in India, become antagonistic to further instalments of reform. He wrote to Reading in the same letter:

“The fact of the matter is, Rufus, that people here are fed up with India, and it is all I can do to keep my colleagues steady on the accepted policy, let alone new instalments of it. The Indians are so unreasonable, so slow to compromise, so raw in their resentments, and the insults to the Prince of Wales have made fierce feeling in this country. If the Government were thinking only of their political well-being, they would show much greater impatience than they have done. That is one of my great difficulties with Winston over Kenya; he can snap his fingers at me and know that the whole of public opinion, Liberal and Conservative, would be on his side on the subject. If only Indians could be got to realise that they could have everything they wanted for loyalty and that there never was a more unjustified unrest than theirs!”

On 14 February 1922 when Parliament reassembled, Sir W. Joynson-Hicks moved a vote of censure on Montagu. “The right hon. gentleman had used his position as a Liberal Minister in a Coalition Government to govern India in accordance with Liberal and Home Rule ideas.” He accused Montagu of “criminal betrayal of every white man and white woman in India all through 1919, 1920 and 1921.” He also accused him of having “broken the heart of the Civil Service.”

Rupert Gwynne, the champion of General Dyer, spoke with unrestrained bitterness. “The appalling muddles which there had been during Mr. Montagu’s tenure of office would have caused any ordinary individual to have resigned, but the right hon. gentleman preferred breaking the soldiers, sacking the civilian or doing anything to save his own skin.” Over ninety members of the House had signed a petition for his dismissal. “It was a disgrace to the Government of the country that anyone who had made such blunders should remain in office as Secretary of State.”

Montagu was not at all aggressive. He enumerated the various causes of unrest in India for which his presence as Secretary of State could not be held responsible—race consciousness, high taxes and economic distress, the Turkish Peace Terms, Bolshevik propaganda and industrial unrest. As regards law and order, “the Government of India recognised their prime and essential responsibility for maintaining order. The Government in India were dealing with these things in the way which seemed best to



them. He had every reason to believe that they were worthy of the confidence reposed in them by His Majesty's Government, and that through them they would win through in India to happier times."

Addressing himself to Indians rather than to his audience, Montagu warned them that further progress towards self-government "depended upon Parliament being satisfied with the use made of the first instalment." He concluded:

"It is well, I think, that India should realise that, based on goodwill and partnership, there are no rights that will be denied her by the British Parliament, but if the existence of our Empire is challenged, if the discharge of the responsibilities of our Government towards India is prevented, if demands are made in the very mistaken belief that we contemplate a retreat from India, then India will not successfully challenge the most determined people in the world—a people who will once again, as it has done so recently, answer the challenge with all the vigour and determination at its command. On the other hand, if India will believe in our good faith—as she ought to believe—if she will accept the offer that has been made to her by the British Parliament, then she will find that the British Empire, for which so many Indians and Englishmen have so recently died, and which at this present moment is saving the world, will give her liberty, not licence, freedom but not anarchy, progress but not stampede, peace and the fulfilment of the best destinies that the future can offer."

When the Prime Minister spoke he was complimentary to Joynson-Hicks. He traced the history of disorder in India back to 1906 and across the whole world and expatiated on the economic and political causes of unrest. He spoke picturesquely of the many warring races and religions of India. "The only unity created in India has been by British rule. If Britain withdrew her strong hand, there would be confusion and desolation indescribable." He ended by an eloquent quotation from Morley—but not a word of gratitude or tribute to Montagu.

## CHAPTER XIX

### *Resignation and Death (1922-1924)*

Aet. 43 to 45

THE FINAL act was now drawing near. On 2 December 1921 Sir Stanley Reed, criticised Reading in the *Times of India* for timidity in stating the opinion of India in public. This may explain why Reading felt so strongly that he should be allowed, not only to protest, but also to publish his protests.

Meanwhile the Conference of Cannes in January 1922 which ought to have discussed Turkey broke up on the dramatic fall of Briand from power. When his successor Poincarè, set out his views, Montagu agreed with them far more than with those of his own Government.

He told Reading on 7 February 1922: "The Conference will take place soon. I have high hopes."

On 9 February Reading offered to send a telegram formally placing on record the view of the Ministers, the Legislature and the people of India as to the necessity to alter the Treaty of Sèvres. This would amount to the ultimate step which the Viceroy could take to enforce his policy, short of resigning his Office. Montagu welcomed this suggestion and told Reading that, if he were thus officially informed of the terms advocated by India, "I would do all I could to obtain them." These words were inserted by Montagu in the draft to replace the words: "I will stand by them."

Thus encouraged, the Viceroy sent a telegram on 1 March 1922 stressing once more the intensity of feeling in India regarding the necessity for a revision of the Treaty of Sèvres.

"We are conscious", the Government of India admitted, "that it may be impossible to satisfy India's expectations in their entirety. But we urge upon His Majesty's Government three points which, due provision having been made for safeguarding the neu-



trality of the States and the security of the non-Turkish population, we ourselves regard as essential:

“First, the evacuation of Constantinople.

“Second, the Sultan’s suzerainty over the Holy Places.

“Third, restoration of the Ottoman Thrace, including the sacred Moslem city of Adrianople, and the unreserved restoration of Smyrna.”

The telegram ended with the fatal words: “So important is it for the Government of India to range itself openly on the side of Moslem India, that we press for permission to publish the foregoing . . . forthwith.”

Montagu received the telegram on Wednesday 1 March 1922 and sent it to be circulated to the Cabinet the same day. It was in fact circulated on Friday 3 March. On Saturday 4 March, Montagu, who was in the country, received a further telegram pressing for an immediate reply to the request for permission to publish.

Montagu then authorised publication without consulting his colleagues, both because he thought this unnecessary, (the views of the Government of India had been known for many months) and because he did not expect an early Cabinet Meeting.

On his return to the Office on Monday 6 March, Montagu sent a further telegram, amplifying his authority to publish, but did not circulate these two telegrams of 4 March and 6 March 1922 to any of his colleagues.

In fact the Cabinet met on Monday 6 March 1922 though the Prime Minister was absent through illness.

“During the sitting of the Cabinet”, Montagu told his constituents at Cambridge, “though in private conversation, I told Lord Curzon I had on Saturday authorised the publication of the telegram. If he had wanted to, he could have resumed his seat in the Cabinet, which was still in session. He could have urged his colleagues to object to publication. I should have had something to say on the other side and, if the decision had gone against me, it is an irony to reflect that there was ample time to send a telegram reversing my orders and stopping the publication of the telegram.

“But what did Lord Curzon do? He maintained silence in the

Cabinet and contented himself that evening with writing to me one of those plaintive, hectoring, bullying, complaining letters which are so familiar to his friends and colleagues.”

Lord Curzon’s description of what took place was as follows:

“In common with my colleagues I received on Saturday afternoon March 4th a copy of the telegram from the Government of India in which they sought permission to publish their manifesto about the terms of peace with Turkey. Knowing that there was to be a Cabinet Meeting at the beginning of the next week and not deeming it possible that Mr. Montagu could conceive of publication without reference to his colleagues, I regarded it as certain that the question would be brought up at the meeting on Monday [March 6]. On that day, before the proceedings began, I mentioned the Viceroy’s telegram to Mr. Chamberlain who presided in the absence of the Prime Minister, and expressed to him the view that, when the permission of the Cabinet to publication was sought, it must be unhesitatingly refused. In this he concurred. A little later, in the course of a private conversation of a few seconds only with Mr. Montagu, I said, ‘Of course you will not authorise publication without reference to the Cabinet.’ To this he replied, ‘I have already done so, on Saturday last’. I was so dumbfounded at the avowal that the Secretary of State had already given his sanction, as has since transpired, before the telegram from the Government of India could even have been seen by many of his colleagues, that I closed the conversation and returned to my seat. Had Mr. Montagu given the slightest hint that there was still time to cancel or postpone the order which he had sent to India by telegram two days before, or had I regarded such a suspension as possible, I should at once have brought the matter before the Cabinet, but I presumed that publication had already, under Mr. Montagu’s authority, taken place in India.”

The letter which Curzon sent was as follows:

“Dear Montagu,

“I much deplore that you should have thought it right without consulting the Cabinet to authorise the publication of that telegram even as amended. Had I, when Viceroy, ventured to make a



public pronouncement in India, about the foreign policy of the Government in Europe, I should certainly have been recalled. As it was I was once rebuked for making a casual reference in a speech. I consulted Chamberlain this morning in the absence of the Prime Minister and found that he entirely shared my views.

“But it was too late.

“That I should be asked to go into Conference at Paris, while a subordinate branch of the British Government 6000 miles away dictates to the British Government what line it thinks I ought to pursue in Thrace seems to me quite intolerable. But the part that India has sought to play in this series of events passes my comprehension. Moreover it is of very dangerous import. For if the Government of India, because it rules over a large body of Moslems, is entitled to express and publish its views about what we do in Smyrna or Thrace, why not equally in Egypt, the Soudan, Palestine, Arabia, the Malay Peninsular, or any other part of the Moslem world? Is Indian opinion always to be a final Court of Moslem appeal? I hope this may be the last of these unfortunate pronouncements. But if any other is ever contemplated I trust at least that you will give me the opportunity of expressing my opinion in Cabinet before sanction is given.

“Yours ever,  
“(Sd) Curzon.”

This letter was marked Private, and Curzon kept no copy.

Montagu drafted, but did *not* send, a reply ending: “If you have any complaints to make on my conduct, I should be glad if you would express them in Cabinet when I shall have an opportunity of answering them. I am getting tired of your everlasting opposition to every proposal that comes either from this office or from the Government of India.”

On 9 March 1922 the Prime Minister returned to work. He read the telegram in the Press and at once sent for Montagu and called for his resignation. This was given in the following terms:

“India Office  
“9 March, 1922

“Dear Prime Minister,

“After our conversation this morning, I feel it to be my duty

to ask you to convey with my humble duty to His Majesty my resignation of the high office which I hold and to ask him to be graciously pleased to accept the same.

“When I received last week the Government of India’s telegram containing the views of the Government of India on the Turkish Peace, I circulated it to the Cabinet. It was only after I received an urgent telegram on Saturday [4 March], repeating the request for permission to publish and asking for an immediate reply, that I felt it my duty to accept responsibility of sanctioning publication.

“It is irrelevant to explain that I did not at that time expect an early meeting of the Cabinet, and indeed what I read of the general political situation led me to think that no immediate Cabinet was likely to be held.

“It is irrelevant for those reasons, that I did not see in the communication from the Government of India much, if anything, which had not been said by them or on their behalf again and again ever since the Peace Conference. India had been given separate representation at the Peace Conference, and having been a party to the original Treaty of Sèvres, I did not conceive it possible that there should be any question that they would not be allowed to state their views upon a question which so vitally affected the peace of India, nor did I think it was possible or right to prevent them informing the people whom they governed of the views that they felt it their duty to put forward on their behalf.

“The Government of India would be the first to acknowledge that it is the duty of His Majesty’s Government to take many wider aspects into consideration and that peace cannot be achieved if the Indian point of view only is considered. Their object was, however, to ensure that the Indian point of view, among others, was given the fullest possible consideration, and that Indians, who were so gravely concerned about the future in the East, should know that their views were being put forward by those who had been granted the right to speak on their behalf.

“I have been fully seized of the grave difficulties which have resulted from the Treaty of Sèvres in India, and I felt it to be my duty to do everything in my power to support the Government of India and the Provincial Governments. When therefore I was assured that the Government of India regarded the matter as one



of great urgency and when I considered their request in this, as in all its aspects, with the recollection of the many decisions of every class of subject which the Government have found it inevitable to take without discussion in the Cabinet, I felt and feel that I was justified in the action that I took.

"I believe that there is much to be gained and little to lose by publicity in these matters, and that that was the reason why the representative of India had been given up till now the fullest freedom in expressing their opinions.

"I need hardly say how deeply I regret leaving the Government and separating from the many colleagues to whose generous co-operation I owe so much. I have not the least doubt that, despite the difficulties and dangers, the policy which, under your leadership, I was authorised to carry out in India will win through to success.

"Yours sincerely,  
"Edwin Montagu"

"P.S. I trust you will send this letter to the Press with a copy of my telegram of Monday which I sent in amplification of the short sanctioning telegram of Saturday. I annexe a copy."

The Prime Minister replied:

"That you were actuated in the course you pursued solely by a sense of public duty, I do not for a moment doubt; nevertheless, the fact remains that, without being urged by any pressing necessity and without consulting the Cabinet, or the Foreign Secretary or myself, or any one of my colleagues, you caused to be published a telegram from the Viceroy raising questions whose importance extends far beyond the frontiers of India or the responsibilities of your office. Such action is totally incompatible with the collective responsibility of the Cabinet to the Sovereign and to Parliament."

Lloyd George said that India had never been denied the fullest opportunity of stating her case at the Peace Conference and since, but the publication with Montagu's sanction of an official manifesto raised quite different considerations.

“If the Governments of the Empire were all to claim the liberty of publishing individual declarations on matters which vitally affect the relations of the whole Empire with Foreign Powers, the unity of our foreign policy would be broken at once and the very existence of the Empire jeopardised. . . The public consequence of this course of action must inevitably be serious. Its effect upon our colleagues is, I need not say, painful in the extreme; but I am confident that everybody, and not least you yourself, will feel that, however painful, circumstances have made your resignation inevitable.

“Ever sincerely,  
“D. Lloyd George”

Montagu's dismissal from office was a shattering blow to him, from which he never recovered. He had put himself technically in the wrong and he had treated his colleagues and Curzon in particular with real, though unintentional, discourtesy. But he reasonably felt that the situation was not in fact much affected by allowing the Government of India to say in public what they had many, many times said already. He inferred that the real reason for his dismissal was, not his technical offence, but the desire to present his head on a charger to appease the Die-hards who opposed Indian Reforms and the extreme Tories who objected to him as a Liberal. He felt that Lloyd George, whose own position was now threatened, had all too readily sacrificed him as a scape goat.

Montagu's next step was, on 11 March 1922, to make to his constituents at Cambridge an angry and bitter speech. A large number of Indian students, we are told, were among the audience. He had come, he said, to explain the reasons for his resignation. The official reason was that he had offended against the doctrine of collective Cabinet responsibility. In the first place he did not consider that the publication of the telegram was a matter for consultation with his colleagues, for there was nothing in the telegram which had not been said over and over again.

Moreover “an accusation of the breach of the doctrine of Cabinet responsibility from the Prime Minister of all men in the world, is a laughable accusation. It is grotesque.” The price of Lloyd George's achievements had been



“... the total, complete, absolute disappearance of the doctrine of Cabinet responsibility ever since he formed his government. The wizard, as he is, from the cupboard where he has locked his doctrine, brings it out conveniently and makes me the victim of this new creed... Cabinet responsibility! Why, ladies and gentlemen the thing is a joke. It is a pretext. We have been governed by a great genius—a dictator, who has called together from time to time conferences of Ministers, men who had access to him day and night, leaving out those who like myself, found it sometimes impossible to get to him for days together.”

Montagu went on to argue that his publication of the telegram was justified, because India was entitled to make its views known. He indicated some of the contents of his second telegram sent on 4 March, which the Prime Minister had refused to publish—this second telegram, Montagu now revealed, had recognised that His Majesty's Government had got to take wider facts into consideration than the interests of India alone, and it had also stated Montagu's opinion that the religious suzerainty of the Khaliph over the Holy Places was not a matter in which the Allies could interfere.

“No, the publication was not the real reason for my resignation. What is the reason? Well, I have been pleading, arguing cajoling, urging against the Prime Minister's policy in the East ever since the Peace Conference. I have never been able to understand from what motive his pro-Greek policy was dictated... I do not know in whose interest it is. I am certain that it is calamitous to the British Empire.”

Montagu sought an explanation for his dismissal in the political situation. The Coalition was dangerously near collapse. The Tory Die-hards did not like the Irish policy, they did not like Montagu. Lloyd George in private conversation had shown his readiness to appease the Die-hards by throwing over Montagu. “There he stands—the greatest strategist in the history of the world—scenting the air, waiting for the pursuit and throwing to the wolves the most convenient cargo.”

The Die-hards had abused and calumniated Montagu in vain. “The great genius who presides over our destinies has done for

them what they could not do for themselves and presented them with what they so long desired, my head on a charger.”

In concluding his speech Montagu said:

“I do not believe that my disappearance means any alteration in Indian policy. I do believe that it has nothing to do with the doctrine of collective responsibility. I do believe that in the main it was an effort to preserve the Government from the fate which must attend it if one of its wings crumbles. Whether it will be easy to create a national party without leaving out a single Diehard and with as few Liberal Ministers in it as possible, [H.A.L. Fisher and Addison had recently resigned], it is not for me to say, but that does not mean for one moment that an honest co-operation between Liberals and Conservatives is not one of the things we ought to strive for in the difficult times in which we live. . . I propose to take my seat in the House as a Liberal believing in honest cooperation with that part of the Conservative Party which has demonstrated its willingness to cooperate.”

In the House of Commons on 13 March 1922 Austen Chamberlain was asked if he had anything to say about the charges made in the Cambridge speech. He narrated the facts fully and dispassionately, but regretted that Montagu had referred to Curzon’s private letter to him. “There is an end to Cabinet responsibility if one Cabinet Minister is to allude publicly to a private letter received from another Cabinet Minister and so force publication.”

The next day, 14 March 1922, Curzon rose from a bed of sickness to speak in the House of Lords. He narrated the facts and went on to say:

“My Lords it seems to me intolerable, as I believe it to be an unprecedented thing, that an ex-Cabinet Minister should, by quoting and distorting in public a private letter written to him under the seal of confidence by a colleague, compel its publication to the world. Such a proceeding appears to me neither consistent with the confidence which should prevail between Ministers nor with the honour of public life.”

He then read the letter to the House of Lords.

“Such, my Lords, are the facts of the case upon which it is open



to anyone who hears or reads my words to pass his own judgement. They leave me still quite unable to determine whether the private or the public conduct of the late Secretary of State for India has been the more inexplicable and surprising, and in using those adjectives I am astonished at my own moderation."

The following day, 15 March 1922, a debate was initiated by T. P. O'Connor. Montagu, who rose from the back bench beneath the gallery on the Ministerial side, came down to the front bench in response to calls from members. He was overwhelmed with despair at his dismissal, which had been received with unseemly shouts of triumph by the Die-hards and had been marked by no appreciation of his unique service by Austen Chamberlain as the spokesman of the Government.

Montagu's defence was on the whole a lame and unconvincing speech and his attempt to justify his reference to Curzon's letter was quite unsuccessful. But the peroration of his speech—the closing words of his public life—were moving and eloquent. He had been giving the reasons why he had not resigned from the Government whose policy in the Near East he so entirely condemned:

"The third reason why I have never thought it necessary to resign till now was that until quite recently I had every reason to think that I had the loyalty and confidence, not of some of my colleagues, but of all of them. Lastly, as I leave my work, may I say that the fascination of India's problems has obsessed me all my life—the Princes and the Native States, each with their individual characteristics, the peoples of India, awakening, striving, often with ill-defined ideals; so varied in their developments, in their races, in their history, in their views, the glorious conception, as I thought it was, and I think it is, of the British Commonwealth of Nations bound together by its very freedom and the mutual respect of all its partners, acknowledging no differences of race and creed, of constitutions or institutions; a country owing allegiance unswerving and devoted to one King-Emperor; the grave dangers of being rushed on the one hand into chaos, and on the other hand being frightened to reaction; a record unparalleled in the history of the world for unselfishness and personal sacrifice of the British

effort in India. I wanted, I longed for nothing better than to devote myself so long as I could to these all-absorbing problems; and not to leave undone or half-done at a most critical moment the work in which I gloried. I have parted this week from colleagues in the India Office and in India with whom I have worked for a term of years with uninterrupted accord, and I have laid down the proudest title that in my belief an Englishman can hold, the title of Secretary of State for India, which means the right in particular to serve the King, this Parliament and India, and this is the unhappiest moment of my life."

There are those who think that Reading should have offered his resignation. Reading gives his reasons for not doing so in a private letter to Montagu of 30 March 1922.

"My dear Edwin,

"I have been wondering every hour almost since I heard of your resignation what you think of all the events. What has particularly troubled me was the course I should take. On the one hand I had great part in the initiative in the telegram incidents. On the other I could not conceal from myself that my departure from office simultaneously with you would have a remarkably bad effect in India—not because of my own personality, but because I had become identified in Indian minds with the Liberal policy you had pursued—The Government at home have made it plain that they find no fault with the Government of India's action. Otherwise, of course, my road was plain before me. But from private telegrams which I have permission to publish, but have not published, the Government at home have accepted the Government of India's action and my action as legitimate."

Montagu formed a plan for a visit to India in the autumn of 1922. Reading delicately but firmly discouraged this. "You can never come as a private gentleman," he wrote on 18 May 1922. "You will find that you will be Secretary of State still to most people in India. I mean they still think of you in that capacity. I doubt whether you quite realise the hold you have on the Indian public. I shall not say more and merely want to put this view to you."

Montagu replied to this letter on 8 June 1922.



“Your letter is full of that generous optimism which is characteristic of you. I can only say that I do not think that my political position has any analogy in its loneliness and hopelessness, but I am not likely to sit down in such circumstances without an effort, though in all probability that effort will no longer be political. There is no new or hopeful factor. So far, at any rate, the lapse of a few months has not shown me any definite line.

“As regards your opinion about my suggestion of coming to India, of course you know how much I welcome your friendship and how much weight I attach to your advice. Nevertheless my present intention is to come. I have made many sacrifices for what I conceived to be the interests of India. I do not think I feel called upon to debar myself from visiting the country in which I am so profoundly interested and in which I have so many private friends. . . .”

On the same day— 8 June 1922—Montagu wrote to George Lloyd. “I am sitting at Breccles, in an almost Indian sunshine, enjoying the first roses and a wealth of summer flowers. I do not remember any spring which has been so wonderful as this one. We had a winter prolonged right up till the beginning of May; intense backwardness of everything and then sudden warmth and an almost explosive burst of blossom. . . I am hoping, as I told you before, to get to India with my wife this winter.”

The visit to India was given up because the Montagus expected the birth of a child in the Spring of 1923.

On 14 August 1922 Lord Lytton, Lieutenant Governor of Bengal, wrote a friendly letter and enclosed an interesting memorandum: “It is a real tragedy,” he said, “that you should have left the India Office just at the moment when the atmosphere began to change and the situation to improve. Since I have been out here [six months] everything has been calm and quiet. The Monsoon has been good, crops are promising, agitation has died down, the non-cooperation movement has completely collapsed since the arrest of Gandhi [in March 1922] and the European community is beginning to take heart”.

Montagu replied on 30 September 1922:

“I presume that so long as I live, and longer, it will always be

thought that it was I who refused to deal with non-cooperation. Of course my enemies very sedulously spread that story, and my resignation was compelled at a moment so opportune as to deprive me of the benefits of the adoption of the policy I had so long advocated. It is impossible to defend myself without giving others away, but the most peaceful will turn at last . . . I am getting very strongly of the opinion that the sooner we get away from diarchy and get a unified Ministry responsible to the Legislature, carrying on with British assistance, the better prospects there will be of success. It is a bitter irony with all transitional stages that they are intensely disagreeable and they lose their point if the goal for which they were designed to prepare the way, is hurried.

“I did not quite agree with you as to the necessity for any clearer definition of what the aim and goal of policy should be. What we have in mind is self-government—to that we are committed—self-government in good time, not forced by agitation, but warranted by circumstances. When that self-government comes, it is unthinkable that there should be a Civil Service except in the sense that there is an executive Civil Service at home, the instrument through which politicians and statesmen work. If a Civil Servant wishes to become a Minister he must resign his position in the Civil Service, stand as an ordinary individual for some constituency and be chosen by the Chief Minister as one of his colleagues. Anything short of that cannot be self-government and that is one of the difficulties of the Civil Service. They have got to be transformed from a governing body to an executive body. I am not sure that it can ever be accomplished with the Civil Service as we know it now. I think we will have to give each Province its own Executive Service.

“ . . . The Turkish situation and the Prime Minister’s speech at the end of last session must have caused everybody in India infinite worry. There are some good things to be gained by being out of office.”

“I am amused,” Montagu wrote to Reading on 29 September 1922, “but the peace which we advocated for Turkey, the peace which I lost office for advocating, now looks like being achieved, but, alas, with no credit to the British Government.”

Montagu was at this time very disconsolate. An official of the India Office writes. “My last memory of him is rather pitiful.



I was over at the House in the official gallery on some business or other after Edwin's resignation. I saw him wandering about in a homeless and friendless kind of way and eventually he came over to me and had quite a chat about this and that; a thing he would never have dreamt of doing in his great days. A tragic figure."

## *Epilogue*

MONTAGU LOST his seat in the 1922 General Election. His daughter, Judith, was born on 6 February 1923.

In February 1923 Montagu became vice-chairman of the Board of De Beers and a few months later he joined the Board of the Underground Electric Railways and subsequently the Board of the Metropolitan and District Railway Company.

In May 1923 Edwin and Venetia Montagu were staying with Balfour at Sheringham when Balfour was summoned to London to advise the King on the question whether Curzon should be asked to succeed Bonar Law as Prime Minister. Balfour on his return was met by some of his party. "Will dear George be chosen?" Lady Desborough asked. "No, dear George will not" Balfour replied. (*The unknown Prime Minister* by Robert Blake, Eyre & Spottiswoode, 1955).

In the winter of 1923-24 Montagu went to Brazil as the Chairman of a British Financial Mission, which recommended the Brazilian Government to put their finances in order strictly on orthodox lines.

After Montagu's return from Brazil he fell ill. The doctors, whom he had always distrusted, treated him as a hypochondriac but Montagu knew that they were wrong. In a brief letter to his wife on 7 June 1924 he wrote:

"For some time I have felt all was not right, despite the doctors. If I had had more time I could have got out of debt, but it was not to be. I fear you will not have an easy time, but things are not so bad as they were and I have failed in a plan to enjoy things, both of us, while we were young because the end is coming so soon. I am miserable at going. You have made me very happy and I hope you will be happy always."

Farquar Buzard realised in the last week of his life that Montagu was a dying man. He died on 15 November 1924. He was forty-five.



This outline of the story of Montagu's political career has given many examples of how critical he was towards nearly all his colleagues except his hero, Asquith, and how cordially he disliked the pompous and the conceited and the insincere. But political life, especially during long years of uneasy Coalitions, is a great maker of enmities. It is fortunate therefore that the picture of Montagu's character can be completed and corrected by the following tribute paid to him by a friend in *The Times* of 15 November 1924:

"In his lovable and complicated character great subtlety of intellect was curiously mingled with simplicity of mind. He had the trustfulness of a child, it was often betrayed and he suffered agonies of disappointment and surprise, but his confidence always returned, ready for the next encounter. . . . Those who knew him when they were unhappy will not forget the depth and truth of his sympathy. He never got tired of being sorry for people; and, if holiness as an infinite compassion for others, he possessed it in a high degree.

"The deep melancholy of his race lay at his heart, but joined to it were gaiety and a most individual wit. His spirits and courtesy were infectious; a little child, with whom he had a long conversation, said afterwards with pleasure: "That tall man made me very good mannered, and so very exceedingly amusing." Children and animals took to him at sight. His flattery was very delicate, and very sincere, as all really comforting flattery must be, for his ironical appreciation of the foibles of his friends was combined with a passionate power of idealising their qualities.

"He had the rarest genius for friendship, but he was one of the men who are only known by those who like them; he froze up quickly in an antagonistic atmosphere and had little power of dispersing it. He would sit in helpless silence, meeting any sympathetic eye with almost laughable despair. But these minor tragedies bore harvests of amusement afterwards; he was a heaven-born story teller, fact and fiction were inextricably mixed, but his hearers generally knew what they were meant to believe. He was one of the few people who could repeat a conversation exactly as it took place, and make the process enchanting. In this accomplishment his gift of mimicry took great part.

"It was at Breccles, his country home, that he was happiest,

and it is there that those who loved him will remember him best. No one was ever a visitor at that house, from the instant of arrival they were received into the heart of ease and of normal daily life. The talk that ranged round the long, narrow oak table in the great hall will always be remembered by the happy circle who often met there. There were no lugubrious set-attempts at "general conversation," the talk flowed at its will, no one tried to direct it, no one showed off, everybody enjoyed themselves, and the host was the brilliant centre of it all."

This helps us to remember that Edwin Montagu's short life, besides much sadness and frustration, had also much love and much happiness.





PART II

THE VISIT TO INDIA.





## *The Visit to India (October 1912-March 1913)*

DURING THIS visit Montagu went to over thirty places, travelling by special trains, ordinary trains, car and elephant. When he had the chance to shoot wild elephants, he felt he could not bring himself to do so, having travelled by elephant over 600 miles.

With remarkable industry he kept a diary. He wrote most or all of this diary in his own (atrocious) handwriting. It was sent home in instalments to his mother and read aloud to the family circle on Friday evenings.

Montagu was an indefatigable sightseer, asking innumerable questions and amassing the most varied information. He was interested in scenery, antiquities, architecture, the picturesque, museums, birds and beasts, especially birds, the technique for producing silk from silk-worms, the Oriental method of grafting trees, feats of engineering and irrigation, curious customs and superstitions. Hospitals particularly interested him owing to his medical training, and schools and colleges, since he had many original ideas about education. Above all he was interested in every sort and kind of human being, from Maharajah to rickshaw-man.

His diary gives an assessment and sometimes a vivid character study of all the men and women he met. Frequently these were critical. Of a Vice-President of the All-India Moslem League: "He is a talkative hypocrite of pretensions and produced letters from poor Ritchie, Morison and Dunlop Smith with the air of a Srinagar tradesman producing chits signed "Winifred Hardinge of Penshurst." Of engineers in general: "I have always been much struck with the wonders of engineering, but am confirmed in my impression of the dreary aridness of engineers. We were surrounded by them—heavy, often country-bred, machine-like formula-worshippers. I do not believe they ever think for a moment of the poetry of their schemes." Of a certain colonel: "I was prepared to see a very bellicose, redfaced colonel, but the reality is a hatchet-faced, emaciated Carsonian lawyer."

"I must say a word about one of the most magnificent monuments



I have seen in India—Sir George Knox, a venerable old thing, with a huge bottle-nose, blue eyes, brick-red complexion, and a long snow-white beard. He turned up to dinner . . . in an old-fashioned frock coat, with the only top hat I have seen in India . . . he will neither retire or die . . . during the whole of his forty-four [actually forty-seven] years' service, he has had one day's leave!!! He is a widower with daughters, but sticks to his work, is very cheerful about it and is convinced that India is changing for the better and not for the worse."

Montagu was not only interested in and critical of those whom he met individually: he was also most anxious to form a true judgment of the Indian Civil Service as a whole. He found them devotedly interested in their files and surprisingly little interested in the people of India. The Civil Service was very dissatisfied, partly on account of the rise in the cost of living, but mainly at the prospect of changed relations to the natives. Few of them wished their sons to come into the Service. "The Civil Servants," Montagu commented, "seem to me to live in great state. They are, of course, conventional and none of them can break through except at the cost of a reputation for lowering prestige or being misers."

The conclusion which he reached after three weeks in India was:

"Up to the present I do not see anything very alarming with regard to the rift between the I.C.S. and the people; but what I do think I see is, that I.C.S. men ignore the existence of the people and pursue a machine-made path.

"Is it not true to say that, with every new educated man you produce, the cry that good government is no substitute for self-government—corruption notwithstanding—gains force?

"The question remains—what does 'self' mean? We ought to make it our business to see that it means *India and English together*."

Montagu was most anxious that more Indians should be recruited to the Indian Civil Service, but regarded "India for the Indians" as an almost infinitely distant ideal.

“I presume”, he wrote, “that nobody would deny that, if and when England could say that she had taught India to govern herself, it would be the greatest day in the History of the Empire. (I cannot help thinking of my last budget speech and maintaining that it will not be an Indian India, for Indian India does not exist, but an Anglo-Oriental India.) So also everybody would admit that, if there are two applicants for a post of whom one is an Indian and the other an Englishman and they are of equal qualification, it would be absurd to give the post to the Englishman. Well, each post given to an Indian displaces an Englishman, and if this were carried to infinity, you would have an Indian Agency governing the country. We are therefore in this sense all in favour of an Indian India. An Indian who wants an Indian India regardless of consequences is an enemy to his country. An Englishman who wants to keep out the Indians who are fit is a traitor to the ideals of his Empire.”

Montagu believed that “over and over again when it is a question of an Englishman or an Indian for a particular appointment, even a Congressman . . . would really prefer to see the Englishman appointed. I am quite certain that their attitude of advising the appointment of Indians against their better judgment will soon disappear, as they become more expert in the real problems of politics.”

Montagu was very conscious of the delicacy of his position in relation to the Viceroy and the Government of India. He asked endless questions, but consistently refrained from expressing his own opinion. The chief subjects uppermost in his mind were the discontents of the Civil Service, the feeling between Hindus and Mohammedans, the complexity and bureaucracy of Indian Government, and the Government's timidity in developing India's natural resources by capital expenditure.

But he did not spend the whole of his time in this six months Gallup Poll. With his endless curiosity he was a delighted sight-seer and never tired of the contrast between the primitive traditions and superstitions of India and the sophisticated outlook of educated Indians.

Though there was so much that he enjoyed in his visit there were some things that he hated—for example the formal dinner parties and the need to make conversation with I.C.S. wives.



Moreover he was clearly conscious all the time that he was a Radical moving among a Conservative Bureaucracy which regarded his visit with suspicion. Reading between the lines of his diary one can see how often his personal charm overcame this hostility.

The programme arranged for Montagu included a number of expeditions to shoot beasts and birds. These gave him the keenest pleasure and are described in detail in his Diary. He had a passion for the study of birds. Mr. Jim Vincent, whom he employed in Norfolk, wrote: "This hobby in his early days took him all over the British Isles, as well as to Iceland, Spain and to other countries, and his knowledge of birds was far greater than many persons imagined. Later he saw the folly of all this collecting of rare birds and eggs and decided to start a bird sanctuary here." "As a shot," Mr. Vincent tells us, "he was erratic. He was an excellent snipe shot, in fact one of the best I have seen, and if he could take any friends where there were plenty of Jack snipe and they freely missed, he would be heard roaring with laughter at their exasperation."<sup>1</sup>

The first camp he visited during this journey to India was at Draphana, fourteen miles from Srinagar. On 5 November 1912: "I got up at 4 a.m. and started out at 5 a.m. It was a bright starlit night, slightly helped by the rising of a dying moon."

Montagu saw a stag and "five bears . . . they looked awfully like caterpillars, as they crawled about in the distance."

But for Montagu and also for the rest of the party (including his brother Lionel) it was a blank day. The next day he succeeded in shooting a stag: "There was great jubilation and handshaking—a practice, I am told, peculiar to this neighbourhood—and he was *hallalled*, i.e. his throat was cut just before he died with a prayer in order that his flesh might be edible to good Mohammedans." During the day, "I had seen kites, serao, pig, chiker and traces of bear and wild cat."

Two days later Montagu and his party went shooting birds on a "jheel," which reminded him of the Norfolk Broads. The bag of 740 included geese, crested pochard, pochard, white-eye, tufted fantail, widgeon, shoveller, teal, gadwall, and mallard; teal and mallard were most prevalent. There were black and white kingfishers, eagles and various kites about. "It was the most wonderful day's

<sup>1</sup> Memoir published in the *Norfolk Post* of 22 November 1924.

shooting I have ever seen . . . I do wish I could have had the day over again and shall always wish my shooting had been better."

Shortly afterwards Montagu had "ten marvellous days" of jungle life in the Kheri forest, shooting from elephants. Of his host he wrote: "Clutterbuck<sup>2</sup> himself turned out to be quite wonderful, and he is destined to become one of the heroes of that side of my life which deals with Natural History, . . . a thorough sportsman, knowing everything of Natural History, of plants, trees, insects, birds and beasts . . . . He has all the unselfishness and all the patience which sport requires."

Later Montagu compares his own amateurishness as a sight-seer with his expertise as a natural historian: "Would a genuine student of Indian architecture or history have found the time at the Taj to be really thrilled by the sight—the first I have ever had—of a hoopoe sitting on a marble balustrade and emitting its well-known cry? I notice that the Indian hoopoe has a four-syllabled cry and puts its beak straight down and its crest straight up to emit it."

At Alwar in January 1913 Montagu shot a panther measuring 6 foot 3½ inches. The method of shooting was to watch, absolutely motionless, in a shelter. "I believe this form of shooting is unique in India and it gives one an opportunity of seeing the panther and watching it; and so makes it especially interesting in the not very attractive performance of the actual shooting of big game." It is to be noted that the Natural History side of Montagu's life was at least as important as the sporting side. Montagu was the kindest of men and a passionate student of bird life, and one wonders how he can have derived pleasure from a day's shooting at Bharatpur on 25 January 1913 when the total bag to thirty-nine guns was 2,200 made up of spot-bills, gadwall, shoveller, very few mallard, two geese, two ruddy sheldrake, teal, pochard, pintail plentiful and white-eyed pochard. "We shot from 10.30 to 1 p.m. and then again from 3.30 till dark."

It is easier to sympathise with Montagu's satisfaction at Mysore on 22 February 1913 when he stalked bison on an elephant. "We

<sup>2</sup> Sir Peter Clutterbuck, V.D., C.I.E., C.B.E., Chief Forest Officer and later, Commissioner of the United Provinces; Inspector General of Forests, India and Burma; Father of Sir Alexander Clutterbuck, Permanent Under Secretary of the Commonwealth Relations Office (1960).



came suddenly to the bull standing broadside at about 130 yards away between two clumps of bamboo. One careful shot and the beast was down with a broken spine; but it required another shot at close quarters to finish him off. It is true that he was not a very big one, but to the untutored gaze enormous; and I know nothing so satisfactory as having killed in a few hours what must be the most difficult animal in India to get."

This was the last day of sport: "I have never enjoyed anything so much in my life as those days of shikar in the Indian jungle, though I am bound to confess that they leave me with a consciousness of excitability and bungling. I put my rifle away with regret that it was all over."

### BOMBAY

Montagu reached Bombay on 18 October 1912 and "saw the sun rise gorgeously over the beautiful Bombay harbour." He records two days later: "Here was India at last and I have since that moment suffered no single pang of disappointment." At breakfast at the Yacht Club his host Gubbay<sup>3</sup> (in charge of customs at Bombay) "spoke of the resentment of Civil Servants at my coming out and the rumour that I had come to abolish the Viceroyalty; Prince Arthur of Connaught as substitute!"

After breakfast Montagu drove in state to the station and inspected his carriage—a most comfortable sitting room, 3 bedrooms, a kitchen and a bath-room, but no luggage van.

Then some shopping with a happy half hour in the Natural History Museum ("including a live Indian hornbill which had been there for eighteen years without drinking"), "a sumptuous lunch" and a rapid drive round Bombay.

The impression Montagu had of Bombay was one of belief in British rule and pride in our administrators "doggedly doing their jobs, interested in their departments more than in speculation of government problems, doing their daily work without hypotheses, working on no principle; but so official, so keen, not on the country, on their work."

<sup>3</sup> M.M.S. Gubbay, C.S.I., C.I.E. Afterwards Controller of Currency and Financial Secretary to the Government of India.

## TARO BARODA TO RAJPUTANA

From Bombay Montagu went by train to Alwar, travelling with the Maharajah<sup>4</sup>, a two day journey. He was impressed with the Indian railways: "the passengers seem to like being crowded, for I notice they avoid empty carriages. They sit on the platforms waiting for their trains with characteristic patience, the essential attribute of these people. They cannot read, know nothing of time, and may wait twenty-four hours."

Next morning Montagu woke up at Ahmadabad at dawn. "I cannot go on raving about Indian sunsets and sunrises, but I do not feel at the moment I shall ever get tired of them; the play of colour is so wonderful . . . There is a beautiful sunset every night . . . the dark comes suddenly and there is no twilight; but the purpling hills and fading lights an hour before the sun goes down are indescribable."

## ALWAR

On reaching his own State the Maharajah emerged from a tent "dressed in gold and white, and wearing gorgeous emeralds and rubies. As we proceed he sits elegantly in his saloon looking out upon the line, now crowded with Alwar citizens, reverently bowing and shaking their hands, which are pointed together and lifted to the lips two or three times. In response Alwar salutes and smiles." 20th October. In the afternoon the party drove out of the palace in state, "I sit on the right of His Highness and spend the drive, feeling an awful ass, answering salutes from troops, peasants etc." They drove to a platform in front of which was a paddock with a gate at the far end, and to the left a long trough. "The gate is flung open, a bugle is sounded behind us and then about five hundred wild riderless horses pour into the paddock and across it at full gallop making for the trough in which corn has been placed. They come on, jumping hurdles until they line up quietly feeding together, move slowly to water, then to grass and then slowly back from whence they came."

Next they visited the elephant stables: "There are about twenty-four elephants mostly females each chained on its small square platform with a house for its attendant in the rear."

<sup>4</sup> His Highness the Maharajah of Alwar (1882-1937), G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E.



The next visit was to the stables—about fifty-four pig-sticking ponies, each with its syce. The Maharajah had bought in Dublin and in England that year two very small ponies, which paced very fast about the camp, three Rolls-Royces, two Napiers and two little 8-h.p. Swifts. In his “desire for new sensation he drove cars down a new cemented road with a gradient of about one in two !”

Then came the climax of the day, a great religious festival, “in its splendour and beauty impossible to describe.” Montagu and his party viewed this seated on top of a four-sided arch at the junction of four main streets. “First came two elephants to clear the way; then led chargers; then a curious horse-carriage; then a palanquin; then infantry regiments; and lastly the Maharajah on a beautifully decorated and cloth-of-gold caparisoned elephant, the mahout gracefully waving a yak tail.”

As soon as the procession was passed, they drove to the top of the Nobles’ School on the outskirts of the town: “. . . when the procession arrived here it was reformed, the Maharajah and fifty of his nobles mounting a two-storied elephant-cart drawn by a four-in-hand of elephants. This car was built by Banhi Singh (1315-57) from a description of the car used by Ramah in fighting Rawana” [The king of Ceylon protected by Shiwa].

The next view-point was one of two towers at a cavalry barracks.

“The procession arrived and Alwar ascended to the other tower where a shamiana [awning] had been erected. Here he said prayers with his pundits, crouching on his throne. Below him on the dun parade ground, was a double line of constables stretching north, and the light-bearers soon showed us, some hundreds of yards away, a huge effigy of Rawana looking like a snowman. Between the lines, and at the foot of our building, were three men on camels. When Alwar had finished his devotions, which included the lighting and waving of tapers, he stood at the front of the tower, attended by two yak-tail bearers and by two men carrying State-jewelled cones or umbrellas. At his orders the sowars [cavalry] on camels rode as fast as possible to Rawana three times, and came back each time with the news that he refused to surrender. (It ought to be three times, but Alwar confesses that, by bad arithmetic last night, Rawana had four chances). Then suddenly Alwar gave the signal

and the artillery opened fire with a crash. Gunners ran from gun to gun, which are fired as quickly as possible; heavy wreaths of smoke hung in the windless air; and so the mimic warfare continued until suddenly the effigy burst into flames, and behind it one could see by its light that the parade ground was occupied in the darkness by thousands of Alwaris, sitting and squatting in close ranks. Many thousands come in from the country for the ceremony. The effigy is destroyed, the lights die down, the cannons stop; and the ceremony, marvellous for its spontaneous vitality, its natural arrangement, its culmination of devout religious observance by a people whose religion permeates its daily existence, is over. It is supposed to be a festival which brings luck to those about to travel; this pleases my superstitious soul! It is observed more or less throughout Hindu India and has been so for eight thousand years probably, but each State makes a speciality of some Festival, and Alwar is famous for this."

After a review of the troops and an inspection of Alwar's garden, menagerie and fernery, the visit concluded by a Durbar at the City Palace.

"We drove down there before him through the City. It was a wonderful sight, the bazaar being thronged with people, again all silent with the silence of deep respect and loyalty. We walked through the City Palace and had our first glimpse of it; but it was too dark to get any impression, save that the white walls illuminated by fairy lamps compelled me irresistibly to think of the White City and to comment that the White City seemed better. [The White City at Shepherds Bush was then an exhibition with Oriental type of architecture.] Alwar informed me that the White City had in fact been copied from this. We took up our position in a low gallery immediately behind where His Highness was to sit. It was a wonderful sight. The Sardars were all seated on the ground according to their precedence, most of them wearing orange turbans of the most gorgeous colour. Our host came in with great dignity, and stood upon the Gadi to receive the homage of the most important Sardars, sitting afterwards for the less exalted. Each man advanced and made him gestures of respect which also differed according to rank, presenting at the same time his tribute in the shape of



coins . . . . One curious note —the usual touch of St. James' Palace was provided by the passing of cards from one official to another and the final announcing of the name."

### SIMLA

"At Simla we came straight to Barnes Court and were greeted by Sir Louis Dane [Lieutenant Governor of the Punjab] who is kindness itself and whose experience makes him a mine of information. In the evening we dined with Lord Nicholson<sup>5</sup> going there in rickshaws, each rickshaw driven, or rather carried, by four Government Jhampannis. I do not suppose I shall ever forget the experience for it produces more mingled feelings than any other experience I have ever had. The moonlight on the hills and deodar forests makes one almost maudlin. The silence of the progression, the rubber tyres and soft run of the Jhampannis was at the first delightful; and I believe that Sir Louis, who informs me that it was he who first introduced a rickshaw, I think about 1880, from Japan, is quite pleased with the present day rickshaw. . . . Downhill on a rickshaw is on the first experience terrifying, and uphill is at first miserable. One's feeling for the unfortunate men who seem to be struggling, as their breath becomes more laboured, is indescribable. In England, even in a four-in-hand, one would get out and walk up some of these steep hills. Nobody, even the most humane, seems to do it in India. I shall definitely set myself not to rebel against the order as I find it, and to express no opinion; so I merely conclude that long training and practice make it as easy for these men to pull a rickshaw as, let us say, an English agricultural labourer to work all day at a harvest. And I did notice that, coming home, when I imagined the men would be most tired the passing of another rickshaw produced a spontaneous and enthusiastic burst, which could not be accounted for except on the theory which all the inhabitants seem to hold. But I am told by Dane that rickshawmen all die early of lung disease."

Montagu's comments on the dinner with Lord Nicholson included: "I am afraid he struck me rather forcibly as very senile.

<sup>5</sup> Field Marshal Lord Nicholson, G.C.B., Chairman of the Commission on Military Expenditure in India. Afterwards Chairman of the Dardanelles Commission in 1916.

He urged me never to talk to my servants, as this was harmful to prestige. Again I make no comment.” Also, “I am again struck with the patriotism and devotion to efficiency of the Indian Civilian and soldier, but must suspend judgment on the equally striking superficial aloofness and apparent lack of interest in the Indian as citizens of the country.”

Montagu was rather inclined to deplore the growing standard of luxury “at a time when the very poor masses are beginning to think.” “Nothing will be done, I believe, until someone who will not worship conventionality is Viceroy with a good Secretary of State. There may be trouble and an unpopular Viceroyalty and bitterness, but it should be done. I think I could do it. If I felt weak I would give the money I saved to charity. It would help to stop the growth of luxury which Indian agitation is carefully watching. People should lead simple working lives at Simla. It should be like a Cabinet Minister’s week-end, not like Oyster Bay” [A summer resort in Long Island].

#### PESHAWAR

*26, 27 and 28 October, 1912*

At Peshawar Montagu met Roos-Keppel<sup>6</sup>, whose whole Indian experience had been in the North West Frontier Provinces and was fascinated by the description of the frontier tribes.

“The tribesmen have a habit of killing one another, but in those areas which we do not administer, we do not interfere. Fifty yards either side of the Khyber road and the road itself is sanctuary and the infringement of this sanctuary results in a fine on a village. Killing one another is a far better way of settling disputes, mainly hereditary disputes, than long litigation with its concomitant debt. We can see this if only we avoid applying our own standards to other races. Despite raids and the necessity of shooting one another, English and Afridis are on most excellent terms, the English praising most particularly the Afridi sense of humour. And the whole thing is like a serious game of chess, in which opponents, while perfectly friendly, take one another’s pieces. The blockhouses and pickets

<sup>6</sup> Sir George Roos-Keppel (1866-1921), G.C.I.E., Chief Commissioner, North West Frontier Provinces.



on the Khyber road, which is a double road, are entirely manned by the Khyber Rifles recruited from the surrounding tribes, often without British officers . . . we have in fact taken advantage of the tribal characteristics with a courage completely justified by its own success.

“Roos-Keppel once had occasion to burn a village. He gave the villagers time to eat and drink on the hillside and sent the malik to burn his own village, which he did rather sadly amidst the amusement of the villagers.”

“Nothing”, Montagu comments, “in the history of the world is probably so remarkable as keeping a country in order by the brothers and relations of the raiders themselves, often defending posts without the assistance or the immediate supervision of any British officer.”

At Peshawar Montagu also talked to Clark<sup>7</sup> about the Civil Service, and was very depressed at the outlook. Montagu felt that the Civil Service lived in too great state. Even those Civil Servants who would like to have their time over again, said that their sons should never come into the service. “The Civil Servants are apprehensive of changed relations to the natives, which will not make the profession a good one for those who follow. All seem to agree that the change which is going on is inevitable.”

On 26 October Montagu drove through Peshawar. “Peshawar itself is in many ways the most interesting city in India, but in a hasty drive the impressions one got were of the extreme business of the streets, the way in which the different races are segregated, the bright colours, the remarkable cleanliness, and the way in which the houses had been built of plinth and plaster to cope with earthquakes, which are frequent.”

On 27 October Montagu motored over the Khyber Pass and looked over Afghanistan.

“Immediately one passes Jamrud [on the boundary] one is in

<sup>7</sup> Sir William H. Clark, K.C.S.I., C.M.G., Private Secretary to Mr. Lloyd George, 1906-10; appointed Commerce Member of Governor General's Council in 1910.

tribal territory. Here all the villages are walled, and inside each plaster wall a little family lives; each enclosure has a tower and it must be really difficult to take them . . . Every Tuesday and Friday the Khyber road is picketed and the huge caravans of camels, cattle and donkeys, coming from Afghanistan, are convoyed down the road. . . . On the frontier the return caravans are handed over to the Afghan convoys. The road was picketed for us on Sunday and we went to see some of the blockhouses. . . . Each blockhouse has three stories, and about seven men under a Subadar in them. They are considered quite impregnable and are provisioned, watered and ammunitioned for about a month."

### CHARSADDA

28 October, 1912

On 28 October Montagu went to Charsadda, as a typical village. He did his best to understand the complex Land revenue system. "It seems to me to be a marvellous system of complete records of landownership and conditions which would make Lloyd George's mouth water."

Montagu lunched with the Assistant Commissioner, saw his Court deal with a murder charge and learnt about the judicial procedure, walked through the bazaar, saw the village barber at work—he was one of the village servants paid in kind—went to the house of the Chief Khan, saw the hospital, the veterinary Hospital and the Middle School and witnessed a procession to celebrate the birth of a child; they "let off with a fearful row their blunderbusses, dancing, beating their drums and singing at the same time."

Two days later: "We motored down the Jamrud road and saw the caravans coming in. There were miles of caravans with picturesque Afghan camels . . . . In the middle of the caravans we passed the Peshawar foxhounds: there's a contrast!"

### PESHAWAR

30 October, 1912

The afternoon was devoted to a walk through Peshawar.

"We saw much of interest, e.g. the goldsmith's street, the slipper



makers, the silk spinners, the inside of a Hindu house with its little chambers opening out of a central hall, the principal Mosque and a Sikh temple where we were garlanded.

“We also saw the prostitute quarter, with its women of all ages, none beautiful. All of them have souteneurs, who are often nominally their husbands. The profession is mainly hereditary . . . . We saw too a manufactured idiot made for begging purposes by preventing the growth of the brain-pan. This horrible practice, now illegal, is mainly restricted to the Punjab. The creature we saw was obviously a miserable idiot, and had his keeper with him. A very terrible sight.”

The events of 1922, so fatal to Montagu, cast their shadow ahead:

“Roos-Keppel says it will be very serious if the Turks are turned out of Constantinople . . . that it would be followed by a series of crusades and an outbreak of Ghaziism, or private assassinations by fanatics . . . . He once saw a fanatic condemned; he urged all the people in court to follow his example, saying that if each killed two infidels they could all be driven out of India.”

In the afternoon Montagu drove out to an experimental farm.

“The farm was very interesting. The superintendent, Mr. Browne, is the keenest little fellow I ever saw.” Montagu must have been a most satisfactory visitor: he was interested in the system of irrigation, how best to grow Italian rye grass, sugar cane, Indian corn and peaches, and the Indian way of grafting, peculiar to India and the East. “Browne is as keen as a Scotsman can be, and that is terribly keen; but I am not quite sure as to his science. He got a long-straw wheat this March blown down by the wind. The Zemindars laughed and said, ‘but we know this is the fate of long-straw wheat: we have been experimenting for generations’. Poor Browne.”

#### KASHMIR

*From 1 November, 1912*

Montagu was duly impressed by the scenery, but not by the Resident.

“Everything that has been said about the beauties of Kashmir seems justified . . . I may as well set down quite frankly here that the Resident does not impress me favourably. His views on India are conventional and orthodox. He doubts whether India is really changing much. He believes Curzon was the greatest man of our time, the last of the old school of autocratic Viceroys.”

“The Maharajah is a very different person. He is surrounded by pandits and holy men from whom he never separates. He will not even go to Jammu by motor, for he would thus leave his hundred pandits in their tongas behind. He is very fond of cricket which he plays badly and is always allowed to make ten runs. Any accident before that is called a no-ball! Ranji [the famous cricketer] came here last year and played with him and made a duck. He was told Ranji was the best player in the world, and that he, therefore, must be better, and he believes it.”

### *2 November*

“We went after tea on the river through the town in a boat rather like a small gondola with pointed ends, paddled by eight men behind and one man in front. The men looked very splendid in their red uniforms. The river is most picturesque and crowded with house-boats which are often simply made with reeds. On the banks are houses of wood often heavily carved, their roofs thickly sown with plants, in spring with tulips and irises, and being set at all angles are very attractive.

“The bridges with their huge long piers are also in the picture, which is only marred by the Hindu Temples with roofs covered with kerosene tins which flash in the sun, and the Maharajah’s Palace, which is a beastly building looking like the new ‘Star and Garter’ at Richmond, only worse. Srinagar is rather like Venice in the use of waterways.”

### *3 November*

“In the early morning I climbed a hill close to the Residency to see the old temple on the top; a very steep climb of about 1000 feet. . . . From the top of the hill I got a wonderful view. The serpentine windings of the Jhalum across the valley are said to have been the origin of the pattern in Kashmir shawls. The valley must be won-



derful in spring, with the fruit blossom and almond blossom out and the tulips on the houses, with the snow low on the hills and yellow mustard on the lower slopes. But it is very beautiful now with the lemon-coloured leaves of the rows of poplar trees that mark the roads and the brick-red of the huge chenar trees (plane trees introduced by the Moguls) all over the landscape. I saw the Dal lake, now very low, with its curious floating gardens in which vegetables are planted on floating reeds. These ultimately come to rest as earth is piled on them, and are planted with willows and become permanent.

“In the afternoon I paid a state visit to the Maharajah . . . . I returned to the Residency, and in twenty five minutes he returned my visit . . . . He was most talkative. . . . He wanted to know where I lived and how far from Buckingham Palace, proximity to which was his gauge of respectability: he wanted to know the best hotel in London—I said the Ritz—he had not heard of it, only the Savoy: then, how many stories had the Savoy? How many had the Ritz? What was the cost of a room at the Savoy? And at the Ritz? How far was each from Buckingham Palace? And how far was Lord Curzon’s house from Buckingham Palace? Why did I wear one eye-glass? Where was it made?”

#### *4 November*

In the early morning Montagu visited a silk factory and the Diary describes how moths are mated, the eggs are laid and then, in boxes of about 40,000, distributed free to the villagers who in July bring the pupas from which the silk is made in the factory and sold, mainly to Lyons, at about 16/- a pound.

After breakfast Montagu visited Mr. Tyndale-Briscoe’s Mission School, by which he was greatly impressed.

“He is really improving the Kashmiris, with his bright, happy-looking boys . . . . There are no individual prizes, but prizes are given to each class, so that it is to the interest of the clever ones to help the backward ones . . . . Boards of Honour are kept for recording various performances, such as swimming across the Walar Lake (about six miles), saving life in fire, cholera etc. and sacrificing life for others . . . . Clubs are formed for kindness to animals (the compound of the school in winter is often filled with asses etc.), for insurance,

for sanitation improvement, for attention to widows, the most helpless class in India (Knights Errant).

“After this we walked through the town. The streets are narrow and very dirty, but, as I thought, very picturesque, at all angles, with their open shops and turfed roofs . . . . We were escorted by the Governor and several police, who were armed with ugly looking two-thonged whips. I hear they use these indiscriminately on the crowds. The Governor said that prostitution in Srinagar was very bad, being largely encouraged by visitors from the plains, and that most of the boatmen would prostitute their relations, who are the most beautiful of the Kashmiris, to these visitors for a few rupees.”

“In the afternoon we drove out about fourteen miles to a camp at Draphana. We stopped to see the two Mogul gardens, which are really wonderful, not big, but depending on their setting for most of their effect.

“Then we visited the trout hatchery and saw the big breeding-fish up to eight lbs. in weight, which originally came from the Duke of Bedford. We wasted some precious time watching a potter at his wheel; but I can never lose interest in this peculiar way-side sight.”

In Kashmir Montagu enjoyed several days' shooting. On leaving he wrote: “I was genuinely sorry to go. The temptation to spend my time in India shooting has become stronger with a taste of the joys.”

The Maharajah travelled with Montagu to Jammu.

“He had decided to leave before I came, but he stopped for me and I have been the guest of the State throughout. He never moves without his holy men telling him a propitious day. The delay therefore was awkward, but the difficulty was got over by some of his baggage being sent on the day originally fixed, so that his migration might begin on the proper day. He does not like going by motor, although he loves motoring, because he thus gets separated from his hundreds of pandits in their tongas; but he has gone by motor. We passed on the way the Maharani and her suite in many closed and sealed landaus. The covered entrance to her camp ended in a tent enclosure right over the road. Each landau was unhorsed and pushed into this, and, the tent-sides being dropped, the occupants



alighted in turn, unseen. Our chauffeur—we were in the Maharajah's Rolls-Royce—told us that when he drives the Maharani, he has to drive the car closed into such a tent and then leave it while she gets out.

“The next day (November 11th, 1912) we left the country of sport, beauty, enterprise, superstition and opium, for the prosaic Canal Colonies of the Punjab.”

### CANAL COLONIES

After two days Montagu recorded some impressions.

“The Dane administration has been wholly concerned with progress of the material kind . . . . Dane, a babbling amateur engineer of restless dreams, has gathered round himself men who have the same gods . . . . Dane's panoply of engineering skill, applied by fat, calculating engineers with uncouth accents, is cutting relentlessly into the lives of the people. They are not really interested in the men as individuals; they want progress reducible to statistics; the men are pawns.”

This is a very characteristic comment, illustrating Montagu's imaginative sympathy with Indians as human beings—perhaps, too, Edwardian snobbishness about non-U accents.

The next comment illustrates Montagu's constructive and anti-bureaucratic caste of mind.

“My next conclusion is this. The time is coming for more audacious finance than Fleetwood Wilson<sup>8</sup> with Abrahams (head of the Finance Department at the India Office) can accomplish . . . . We are going to develop the resources of India. Well, we must do it. The country is demonstrably rich, and the people are getting demonstrably better off, but there are no capitalists, as in America, to develop the Punjab, for the wealth is too evenly distributed. Let the Government step in. It is not an administering, legislating government; it is ex-hypothesi a paternal government with its land,

<sup>8</sup> Sir Guy D.A. Fleetwood Wilson, G.C.I.E., K.C.B., K.C.M.G. Entered the Home Civil Service in 1870 and rose to be Director of Finance at the War Office in 1907; Finance Member of Viceroy's Council, 1908-13.

its salt, its railways and its canals: and it cannot be financed on Treasury lines, but as a business . . . . The Maharajah of Kashmir limits progress because he worships strange gods; we limit progress because we worship Treasury traditions."

## LAHORE

After leaving the Canal Colonies Montagu went to Lahore. He duly visited the University, Schools and Hospitals. He begins to record his sightseeing, but breaks off: "I do not profess to give a catalogue of all we saw, for one can always refresh one's memory by guide books. The longer this trip lasts, the more regretful I am that I did not bring a reliable shorthand-writer and typist from home. I hate writing, my writing is illegible, and I doubt whether I shall ever have the energy to keep up this diary."

Next a deputation of Mohammedans whose grievances and fears were carefully and sympathetically noted, a large dinner party, ("These dinners are all very much alike, and of course quite useless for meeting people") and an earthquake. ("Loud vibrating noises and creakings were heard and sensations exactly like the effect of suddenly moving tube trains over and under the room . . . . No one seemed the least alarmed.")

"On November 16th, I went out before breakfast and rode on an elephant through the city of Lahore . . . . It is curious to go from the modern Lahore with its verandahed shops, large red sandstone or brick buildings, and wide, well-wooded streets, to this Peshawar-like bazaar. The elephant was a good experience after an earthquake. I cannot conceive how one shoots off one. I dare not leave go of the very uncomfortable seat, and the elephant's getting up is even more disturbing than his sitting down. It is almost impossible to remember which end is going to heave or subside first, and I wonder now if I am right in saying that the back goes down first and the front up first. . . . There was a great crowd in the streets. We were raved at by a Beerbohm-Tree-like Fakir, who seemed to be overacting inordinately. I thought he was preaching a holy war, but the police officer who accompanied us, assured me he was pointing out the advantages of British Rule! I wonder!"



## A garden party at Government House

“(of the category duly labelled ‘Bridging-the-gulf Parties’) was indescribably horrible. The smart English ladies were gossiping together, while a few of them, with nearly all the English men, were playing tennis or badminton, absolutely ignoring the Indians . . . . And they say it is all inevitable! Two things are quite clear to me, if they go on saying this: first, that it always will be inevitable, for a beginning will never be made, and secondly that such parties ought not to be given at all. Among highly educated Indians they must increase bitterness and lack of respect, through misunderstanding; and they are bad for both.

“I think the women are at the bottom of it. Our women will not like the Indians and will not try to. They deteriorate very quickly here in everything except courage, and their wonderfully good quality of loyalty to their men does not make up for their selfish smartness and shortsightedness which makes them the most wearisome company. They infuse the air of *de haut en bas* and cynical resentment, which is so common among the men and which the sensitive educated Indians hate so much. They know, what is quite true, that the Indian does not respect them, or approve the way they dress and live; and they take no pains to explain things. And the Indian does not really like them and his women hate us and do not really like to talk to us, even when they are not Purdah. I believe it is true that the mothers of India are the future heads of real sedition; that the women are almost completely alienated; and that they are powers in their own homes and in affairs generally, and work through the men.

“. . . The well-meaning of it all is so pathetic. An Indian official never explains; there are no rules to show him how. He does his duty and at that he is better than any man in any age—but to explain things and thereby to bring us and the people together in the light of humanity is to them impossible . . . . One sees in Lahore the type of what I fear exists in India, which, if it goes on, will lead us to disaster—the resentment of the educated Indian and his claims.”

On leaving Lahore,

“I said goodbye to Dane who had really done us wonderfully

well. He has left his mark on the Punjab, and his energy has been rewarded. If strident, diffuse cackle and complacency have left a dangerous aftermath, there is much to be said for him—a very great deal—on the other side . . . . I conceived a great admiration for Dane's admirable private secretary, Major Bailey. He always looked as if he were going to be sick when making arrangements for us, and as if he hated the whole thing; but he did it most awfully well."

Montagu's final reflections on Lahore were on "the fearful complication of Indian Government, and the urgent need of avoiding duplication and achieving simplification . . . . We have in India every century from the twentieth to the fifth, and the same machinery for all. It is too rigid and unimaginative for the twentieth, too conventional and elaborate for the fifth; and we train our officials to go into partnership with the twentieth by making them administer the maze of rules applied to the fifth."

#### AMRITSAR

At Amritsar Montagu inspected the Golden Temple.

"The most wonderful crowd of colour—browns, yellows, whites, reds, orange predominating—surged eagerly round. Poor Hardinge! . . . . The band played 'God save the King' and alas! I could not recognise it to stop it. I never felt so Viceregal in all my life. Every balcony, every roof, every doorway, every road, passage and pavement was crowded with people of all ages and both sexes, including some nearly naked gurus [spiritual teachers] old men plastered with yellow ochre and their faces completely yellowed by it . . . . The whole thing moved me much. I put the crowd at about 50,000. They had come, some attracted no doubt by the red carpet, but no one could have heard of me, hardly a soul could have known what a Parliamentary Under Secretary of State really is: yet they came out of superstitious reverence for the British Government and the existing order of things. When we reflect how we treated these people in pre-mutiny days, how one half of the Sikhs are supposed to be more disaffected than any other part of the population of India to-day, it was a marvellous asset of British pre-eminence that was disclosed to me that day."



On leaving for a shooting holiday at Kheri on 15 November Montagu looked back on his first weeks in India . . . . "I am very tired of a really sustained effort to see everything and everybody and to remember it all. It has been most interesting to me; words are far too mild to describe it, and I do, I trust, grasp the situation. . . . I shall truthfully appreciate a rest." The holiday at Kheri was on the whole successful—"an all too short ten days which for sheer enjoyment were unsurpassed in my tour".

#### MEERUT

30 *November*, 1912

"I was much impressed by the cordial welcome of the villagers on all sides . . . . As a first impression the people here [the United Provinces] seem to be more sympathetically handled than in the Punjab; they are taken more as they are, and not hustled into prosperity à la Dane." Montagu became critical of his host at Meerut. "He is more difficult to get information from than anybody I have met recently. I am, I fear, a very impatient learner, getting my questions quickly formulated and expecting a coherent answer, however many qualifications may be necessary."

Shooting and bird watching were a consolation. "One incident is worth recording. We stalked some pigeons in a large tree in the middle of the grass. On the same tree were a green woodpecker, several parakeets and a white-headed eagle, sitting on two eggs, which I raided. There is a vulture sitting on its eggs close to the camp. This is one of the remarkable things about bird-life in India, that some birds are nesting all the year round: the birds of prey nest now."

But the game bag for the three days 1, 2 and 3 December was disappointing.

"I record for my own recollection that this camping part of my time has not been very carefully arranged for me. My time with Clutterbuck, ecstatically enjoyable though it was, was too early in the season. This camp, if chosen for me at all ought to have come last week, when I should have seen the large Ganges Fairs. Nearly a million people collected at Meerut would have been worth seeing.

"I must confess to feeling that there underlies my whole tour a

suspicion of Hardinge's aloofness or cold acquiescence. He has given instructions to make arrangements for me faultlessly and soul-lessly. But neither he nor his staff show any signs of trying to add their share in contributing memorable or instructive items. Hardinge will doubtless welcome me for a week at Delhi as a host should a guest he feels bound to entertain. But that is all the personal share in my doings he proposes to take. He has not desired my presence at the State entry to Delhi, did not seem to think going to the Jubilee at Bikaner would have amused me. I cannot of course feel any resentment at this lack of any sort of personal enthusiasm or desire to assist me. I do not suppose he has ever found occasion to realise or appreciate me; but I certainly regret it, and it will make it all the more difficult to focus what seems in India a very intangible personality."

#### ALIGARH

*5 December, 1912*

Montagu spent the day mainly in the company of Meston<sup>9</sup> and Marris,<sup>10</sup> the local Collector, and was greatly impressed. "Here are men convinced of the changing conditions, looking forward to the part that they will have to play, without fear, without pessimism. The very complication of an administration in partnership as compared with the administration of governor over governed does not frighten them, but leads them to new enthusiasm."

Montagu's visits at Aligarh included a Salvation Army settlement.

"It was little short of amazing. The criminal tribes in the United Provinces are really one of the most difficult problems which man ever had to face. Roving, roaming, nomadic, without home, without ideals, they find their way from village to village, going from prison to prison, pathetically pleading for some place where they

<sup>9</sup> Lord Meston (1865-1943), K.C.S.I., C.B.E., Secretary to the Finance Department of the Government of India, 1906-12; Lieutenant Governor of the United Provinces, 1912-18; Imperial War Cabinet, 1917; Finance Member of the Viceroy's Council, 1919.

<sup>10</sup> Sir William Marris (1872-1945), K.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., Joint Secretary of the Home Department of the Government of India, 1917-22; Governor of the United Provinces, 1922-27; Member of the Secretary of State's Council.



would be allowed to remain, but being always turned out, either by the local law or by the Zamindar [landowner] as soon as they resorted to the only trade they know. Every effort to reclaim them has failed. . . . The Salvation Army, by making the women comfortable induced the men to stay, and taught the men handicrafts.”

Montagu describes this work at length and with great admiration. Briefly and sadly he ends the day’s diary: “We had in the evening a similar dinner party to the lunch, with the same guests, and I sat between the same people.”

#### AGRA

6 *December*, 1912

Montagu visited Fatepur Sikri (“a wonderful building, built, with the exception of its white marble gem of a saint’s tomb, entirely of red sandstone”) and the Taj three times in two days:

“When one comes to the Taj it seems impossible for me to express any competent opinion . . . . I saw it on the morning of the 6th in a cloudy sky which, whilst I was there, changed to a bright sun. I saw it on the early morning of the 7th, when, as the sun rose and the films of mist disappeared, the river and the details of its architecture were developed as in a photographic negative. And I saw it in the glow of the setting sun, as the sun went down in bright red and purple over the Fort, and gave to the Taj a pink glow, which changed to dull grey and finally sunk almost to invisibility. I know now what Lutyens means about its architecture being bad. I am convinced that it looks better the nearer one gets to it and the more foreshortened . . . . But then, when one stands near it, when one sees the light on it, when one sees the beauty of its carving and its inlaid design, there is no reason for criticism. And I know of nothing more wonderful that I have seen in my life than the dawn on the Taj on that misty day, or the effect of the interior, with its rolling echoes, lighted by a single lamp, and the pierced screens of unequalled beauty with which the tombs were surrounded.”

## CAWNPORE

*9 December*

After duly visiting textile factories and the agricultural college at Cawnpore, Montagu had time for a walk through the Indian part of the city.

“The narrow streets, the shops segregated according to trade, the hurrying and teeming crowd, the bright ever-changing colours, the curious mixture of instinctive art and horrible crudity of ugliness in clashing colour are wonderful. . . . All sorts of incidents pleased me. Here a woman was having a heavy silver ring riveted on to her toe. There a naked contortionist was doing very bad tricks to an admiring crowd with much grunting and make-believe effort. There a cheap jack was selling Birmingham trash. A little further on boys were sitting round with their red-vested bulbuls sitting contentedly on wooden perches, old men, knotted and gnarled, calves and dogs, birds and goats, men shouting announcements of temple festivals and so on.”

## LUCKNOW

*10 December, 1912*

Lunch with the Rajah of Mahmadabad, a large garden party and “a huge dinner party, but nothing to record of interest.”

The next day a visit to villages. “We saw the corn being thrashed by oxen and the chaff winnowed from it, an operation largely dependent on the existence of the west wind. We saw an oil-press of mustard oil worked by a bullock; and an old woman making meal with a hand quern, and the same old lady kneading rice with a stick in order to get it out of its husks. We saw shopping with cowries—sixty four to the anna.”

The following day, December 11, Montagu motored forty miles to shoot crocodiles, and he left Lucknow on 12 December. “I said good-bye to Meston full of confidence in the future of the United Provinces. He is a splendid fellow, with excellent officers of the modern school, determined to win the sympathy and invite the assistance of his Province.”



## BENARES

Montagu spent five days (15-19 December) at Benares.

“Early in the morning we motored to the upper end of the town, and went down the Ganges along the front of the City in a boat belonging to the Maharajah. The boat is probably unique. It looks like a paddle steamer, but the paddles are worked by six men standing in the boat working as on a treadmill. It would be absolutely impossible to describe the beauty and the unceasing interest of the bathing ghats. Steep steps down to the water are crowded in the early morning with people bathing—people of all ages and both sexes swimming, wading, plunging, always with great modesty and with a certain minimum of clothes. Here you see a man standing on one foot with both hands raised to Heaven; there a man saying his morning prayers; there a woman having her clothes carefully washed: next a crowd of dhobis [washerwomen]. Some devotees sit right out over the water in little cages or open cabins on the end of planks, busily praying. To some little cabins are built steps from the water, carefully screened, for Purdah women; you see small children being dipped by their parents, men taking the precious water in little Lotas [spherical drinking pots] and pouring libations to the Ganges, large umbrellas to screen the worshippers from the sun, and at intervals ghats with burning bodies in them. All over the town there are little lingas<sup>11</sup> which people worship and ornament with flowers. I imagine they are more or less animists, and I am told that experts see in their emblems traces of phallic worship as they do in the Christian cross. The temples are crowded with people throwing flowers, tolling bells, murmuring prayers, and receiving marks of red ochre on their foreheads from the priests in charge. We went as near as we were allowed, watching the crowds and noticing the people who had just bathed, painting on their caste marks and the roadside barbers shaving and cutting hair. On our way we were garlanded a hundred times with a string of bright marigolds.”

“It is a curious fact that Benares has never spread across the Ganges; but I am told that if a good Hindu dies on the wrong

<sup>11</sup> To quote a writer of 1616: “the figure of an idol which in decency I refrain from naming.”

side of the Ganges, he becomes in his next incarnation a donkey.”

On 18 December Montagu wrote: “To-day, the 18th, it is exactly two calendar months since I landed in India. I have only to repeat that I never enjoyed anything more, and that it has been a success from beginning to end. I have only been troubled by events at home.”

#### CALCUTTA

Montagu spent from 21 December to 31 December at Calcutta. He greatly admired the Governor of Bengal, Lord Carmichael,<sup>12</sup> and his wife. “I have never met such a genuine whole-hearted devotion to duty, soundness of judgment, love of work and determination to justify it. They are both almost worshipped by the whole population of their Province.”

A bomb was thrown at Lord Hardinge at Delhi on 20 December. “It is difficult at this moment to write any criticism of Lord Hardinge, for the outrage at Delhi has upset almost everything.” Montagu’s impression was that Hardinge, in recent months, had become out of sympathy with progressive thought.

“I visited Tagore (the painter, nephew of the poet) in his own studio. He is a genius . . . he reads Indian poetry, he studies philosophy, he watches the Indian people, and he paints them from memory, being imbued with the spirit of the old Persian and Rajputana painters. Thus he strives, I think successfully, to perpetuate one of the only arts of India. I bought for a mere trifle a picture called ‘Purdah’, showing a woman looking on to the outside world for the first time from the seclusion of her apartments. It is a gem of presentation of a problem . . . . He told me that his admiration for Whistler, Holman Hunt, Maddox Brown, Aubrey Beardsley, etc. had so affected him that he had deliberately to forget European Art in order to preserve his Indian inspiration.”

Montagu said good-bye sadly to Lord and Lady Carmichael.

“They are doing splendid work, and I never could have imagined

<sup>12</sup> Lord Carmichael (1859-1926), G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., K.C.B., Governor of Bengal, 1912-17.



a kinder welcome than they have given me or more assistance than their staff have given me. The tour that I am undertaking is not always very easy to arrange. But it is easier when I think that it is doing a really useful work in the good government of the country, and is appreciated by those who govern, as well as by the Indians. This, I really honestly believe, is true of my visit to Calcutta."

Montagu had a very large number of interviews in Calcutta, Babu Moti Lal Ghose : "Keen Nationalist with a very acrid pen. I liked him very much, but quite realised how difficult he must be to cope with. Although a Nationalist, he is certainly not a Moderate. . . . I can very well conclude that he is a most unreliable person, and yet that does not prevent him, to my mind, from being very attractive."

Montagu attended many social functions at Calcutta, including the State Ball, "a large entertainment and very well done, except for the ridiculous State Lancers, which are considered essential. Twelve people, most of whom like myself had never danced before, were bullied through five figures of this dance by capable A.D.C.s."

Montagu paid a tribute to Gourlay, the Governor's private secretary: "He is a shrewd, business-like Scotsman, very popular with the Indians and has genuine sympathy for them. I admire his common sense immensely. He is a genuine enthusiast, but has a great capacity for judgment of the people with whom he comes into contact. But he is a Scotch Nonconformist, and there may be trouble between him and the more ornamental staff. I found myself in agreement with him on most subjects." There was a certain amount of the Puritan in Montagu's outlook, with his enthusiasm and sincerity and hatred of humbug.

The fruitless attempt to find out who threw the bomb at Delhi led Montagu to write of the police:

"The police in this country are a real danger . . . . They were doing their best to stir up all the old trouble at a time when the policy of conciliation is likely to do so well, and there is evidence that they are being supported by that arch-retrograde, Craddock<sup>13</sup> . . . . He and all the police are 'they-all-want-to-cut-our-throats' believers.

<sup>13</sup> Sir R.H. Craddock (1864-1937), G.C.I.E., K.C.S.I., Home Member of the Governor General's Council, 1912-17; Lieutenant Governor of Burma, 1917-22.

Even if they do, what is the use of stirring them up by refusing to treat them fairly, and shadowing them with heavy-footed constables?"

#### UDAIPUR

A fifty-hour journey took Montagu from Calcutta to the Rajput State of Udaipur. "Udaipur in situation is all that is claimed for it. If the lakes were landlocked arms of the sea, the blue sky and scrubby little hills might give one an idea of an idealised Riviera. It is remarkable that such a place has never been exploited as a winter resort. Just as Calcutta seems to me far pleasanter than Cairo in climate, so I would, given the proper accommodation, choose Udaipur before Cannes or, let us say, Biskra."

The ruler of the state, the Maharana,<sup>14</sup> who had been away in the country, shooting, motored over twenty-six miles to welcome Montagu.

"He is a fine dignified greybeard, with beautiful eyes and considerable humour . . . . When the Maharana moves, he gives one anna to each poor woman who claims it. I liked his largesse, his feudal nobles, his old-world courtesy; but regretted the modern big game drive and the hideous Palace, as being ill-assorted to this old-world Conservative."

"We rowed right across the larger, or western, lake at sunset. The beautiful Water Palaces, with their delicate tracery and elegant proportions standing sheer out of the water, the islands with storks and glossy ibises, the Palace now pink with glow—all these were more than memorable."

After seeing the Palace where wild pigs were kept, "back across the lake, and home, seeing many flying foxes and ibises".

#### JODHPUR

*Jodhpur, January 1913*

At Jodhpur, the largest of the Rajput States, Montagu was much attracted by the ruler, Sir Pertab Singh, who "is short, erect,

<sup>14</sup> Maharana of Udaipur (1849-1930), G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., K.C.V.O.



delightful and reminds me, more than anything else, of the best type of shrewd, kindly, courteous, North-country squire, blunt of speech, with plenty of wit, heaps of consideration for others and no swank. He told me he was sixty-eight and had known every Viceroy since Mayo(!) [Viceroy 1869] and liked Lansdowne [Viceroy 1888-1893] the best. He also said he was fond of Hardinge. As for Curzon, he was a very 'knever' man (Sir P. always says 'N' for 'L'), but there was 'too much row.' Minto had a very difficult task, but he was not a 'knever' man, but slowly, slowly he work and Curzon disappear. He likes to find fault. Riding with George the fifth and Bikaner at the time of the Coronation, he looked Bikaner up and down, could see nothing wrong, so finally said, 'King, look at Maharajah Bikaner's horse, he has ears like a donkey.'

"Nothing could be greater than the contrast between Udaipur and Jodhpur—the water City and the rock City set in a desert. The fort dominates everything here, a great rock in a flat plain, the home of hundreds of kites and pigeons. . . . I think it and the City nesting at its foot are the most impressive things I have seen in India. The City is thronged with many-coloured, moving, talking crowds, as always; but the people look merrier and happier, the streets are wider and well-drained, and there are many open spaces." "The houses are often many stories high, and are made of red sandstone, often white-washed to cope with the heat. They are really beautifully carved, in a way I have seen nowhere else. There are sloping, stone projecting roofs with curious spikes."

Sir Pertab took Montagu to see the Fort ("one of the most impressive buildings I have ever seen"). "The ancient custom is that widows of the ruling families live here, and are never seen again after the death of their husbands. But this custom is breaking down."

#### BIKANER

7 January, 1913

"Three admirable and pleasant days" were spent shooting demoiselle crane, blackbuck, sand grouse and chinkara. ("We have had the experience of shooting chinkaras from bullock carts, from the special train and from the motor car").

Montagu admired Bikaner<sup>15</sup> “a man of really advanced views”, and was interested in his heir.

“The boy, Abu Singh, is a wonderful boy. At the age of ten and a half he has killed leopards, blackbuck and chinkara, and has shot a hundred and twenty sand-grouse in a morning with a small bore gun, and is quite a good shot. One wonders where he will go in a few years’ time for more sensations!

“The more I saw of Bikaner, the more I liked him. The swagger which I did not notice in England, and the rather over emphasised affectation of English slang vanish before one’s realisation of his great business ability, his devotion to the interests of his State, and his great popularity among the English and the Indians who serve him.

“The complication of Government in British India is one of the reasons for its not being as popular with its subjects as is the Government in a Native State. Simple people leading simple lives in primitive villages cannot get hold of the man who can settle their claims or decide their cases. . . .

“With regard to the Native States one finds that indetermination of policy so fatal to progress. Curzon treated these Princes as dogs; he irritated them, annoyed them, interfered with their domestic affairs and ground them down. Minto afterwards reversed the whole of this policy. But Minto went too far in the reversal of Native State policy. . . . His words are always quoted against the Residents by those who dislike progress. Now Lord Hardinge has succeeded Lord Minto with an inscrutable, intangible policy, and one awaits hopefully a successful middle course.”

After sightseeing at Ajmer and Jaipur Montagu reached Alwar on 14 January, 1913.

#### ALWAR

He liked the Ruler: “There is no doubt in my mind that he is the most interesting and cleverest of the Rajput Chiefs.”

On 15 January Montagu, his brother and Alwar motored to a blackbuck reserve.

<sup>15</sup> Maharajah of Bikaner (1880-1943), G.C.S.I., K.C.B., G.C.V.O., G.B.E.



"I did most of my stalking on foot, for I have never learnt to ride and I find mounting and dismounting a horse a difficult matter.

"I was interested to see whether the high opinion I formed of the City of Alwar when I came here as the first place I visited in India was maintained when weary and jaded with nearly three months' sightseeing. The result is very satisfactory.

"I had some talk with Alwar during the last day about religion. He contends that all objects have souls (not "manifest" souls in inanimate objects) and that Pantheism is the same thing as Monotheism. He talks very well and this philosophy is obviously his hobby. We left for Delhi at midnight."

#### DELHI

18-25 *January*, 1913

The Viceroy, Lord Hardinge, was still suffering from the wounds and shock of the bomb attack on him. Montagu saw him every day for about half an hour, but no conversation on any subject of controversy was possible. "The more I see of him, the more convinced I am that, in principle, he, personally, is on the right lines. . . his views answer that great test of soundness—they agree with mine. I then set myself the task of discovering why it is that his policy so often seems slack or wrong, vague or ineffective. The answer is to be found in the fact that he leans on the advice of his counsellors and does not form his own view."

Montagu quickly formed his own view of the Members of the Viceroy's Council. (More correctly called the Governor General's Council—a Cabinet of Seven.)

"A's faults, particularly his constitutional crookedness and his love of the lie, are obvious; but he has a vigorous personality, which has been, and is pre-eminently now, of incalculable value to India. B is really little better than a universally popular, cheerful ass who has never shown any desire to justify his appointment or any ambition to learn his work. I think C far and away the cleverest man in India, interesting and illuminating in every subject, with sound views, progressive thought and clear judgment. But he is always waiting for the cat to jump, always on the make, and I think as crooked and as big a liar as A. D is an honest, bigoted,

hard-headed, prejudiced administrator, whose judgment is preposterous. E is industrious, but excessively stupid. F is the laughing stock of the whole of India, wild in his views, and absolutely unreliable. There's a team for you! All on the make except A, who wants the comparatively small reward of a peerage; all quarrelling together, all with their own spies and lady friends; and yet the machine works! I attribute this to the inherent high principle and love of their work in the I. C. S. and the efficiency of Secretaries and Under-Secretaries.

"All business, complete or incomplete, trivial or critical, is discussed at tea and at meals. . . . The C.I.D. quite normally reports on officials, high and low, in the Provinces, directly to the Home Government. This would be bad enough; but it is worse because even the police talk, and the women know who, and why, each suspect is being watched.

"I cannot say that I think Hardinge has a good staff. G is a nice fellow, but his ability does not impress me, and I think he is clumsy in his methods and very prejudiced in his views. H seems to have been chosen for his bad manners. But the villain of the piece is J, he is attractive and, I imagine, good at his work and wholly satisfactory if he would only stick to it. But his head is swollen, and he thinks he is a statesman."

These trenchant criticisms are of interest as showing how Montagu's mind worked, and that tolerance was not one of his virtues (or vices). They were hastily jotted down for his own eye, and a hope that after the lapse of nearly fifty years they can be quoted without giving pain or offence to those who recognise the identity of the men criticised. Hardinge called them "a very curious Executive Council".<sup>16</sup>

The Diary continues: "I have to make a recantation now. I have recorded often an opinion that Lord Hardinge was strenuously, as far as was consistent with his politeness, opposing my tour in India. But I was wrong. The subtle opposition I felt is there. . . . it is the staff. They hated my politics and my coming out. All the difficulties were due to Du Boulay."<sup>17</sup>

<sup>16</sup> *My Indian Years*, John Murray 1948, p 15.

<sup>17</sup> Sir James Du Boulay, K.C.I.E., C.S.I. Afterwards Secretary to the Government of India, Home Department and, in 1916, member of the Governor General's Council.



This led Montagu to feel that he should have insisted on precedence immediately after Members of the Council, or before them, and claimed a salute of guns. "It is the only way to get respect out of these rule-bound snobs and prigs."

Montagu was depressed at the talkativeness of the women, and at Delhi's hostility to the Governor of Bengal. The King's staff had looked down on the Viceroy in the same way as the Viceroy's staff had looked down on the Governor of Bengal. "The real doctrine", Montagu wrote, "ought to be, the bigger the Viceroy, the bigger the King. In the same way, the bigger the Governor of Bengal, the bigger the Viceroy. But his staff do not see this, and all sorts of tittle-tattle, every little thing is used to jeer at him."

But Montagu did not withhold praise where he felt it due. He wrote:

"... the best man in Delhi, and one of the best in India, is Hailey,<sup>18</sup> the new Commissioner. He is keen, industrious, popular, capable, definite, decided, well-educated, interested in ancient India, he has everything, perhaps, but a little softness of outline. . . . He shewed me all the sights of Delhi, and was really an excellent guide. He has a personal assistant, [G] de Montmorency [C. I. E.] who is also very popular and good. These two are both splendid fellows."

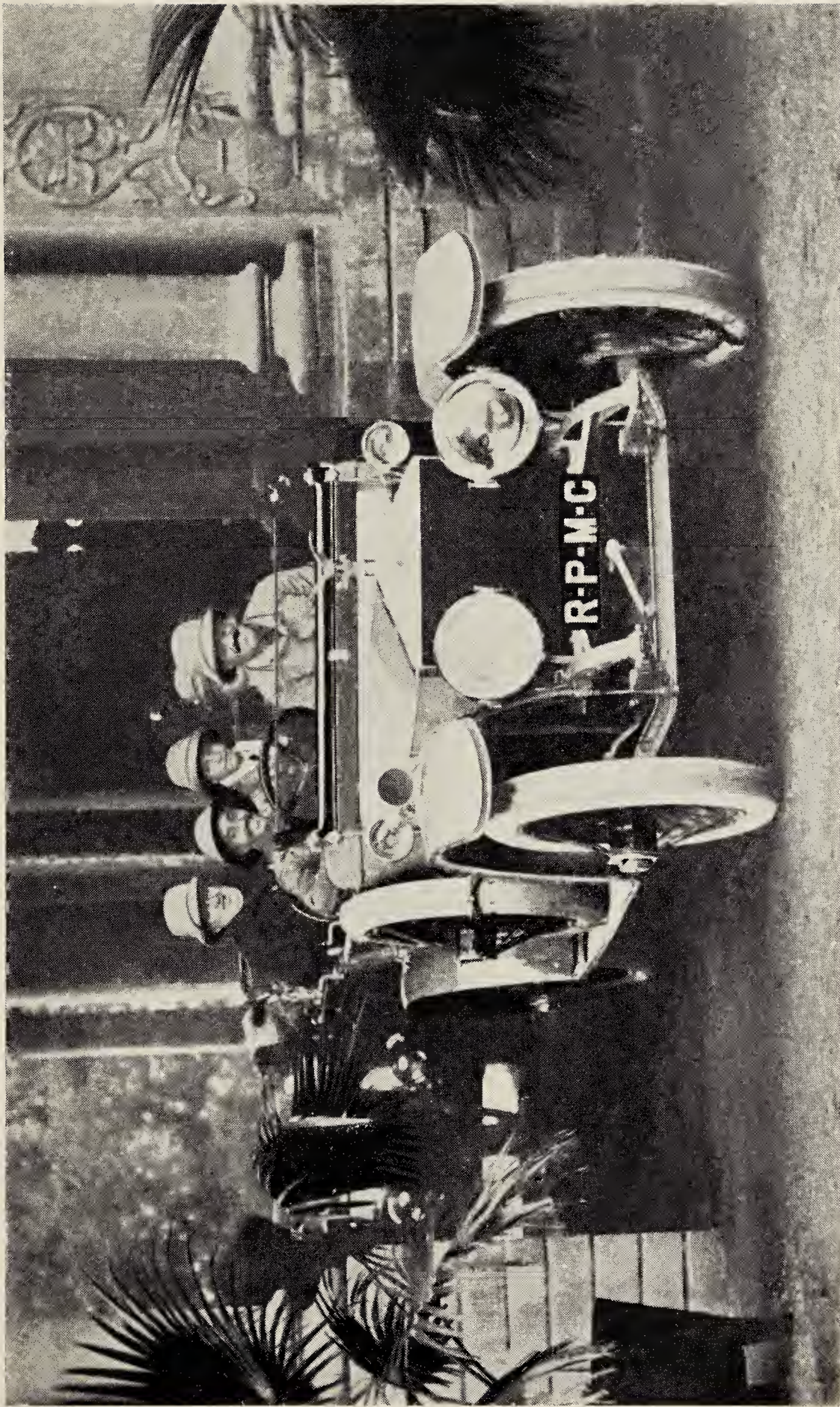
Montagu became deeply interested in the rival plans (South site versus North site) for the new Delhi.

"As regards the experts I find Brodie<sup>19</sup> as attractive as a capable engineer always is to me, Swinton<sup>19</sup> is rather like a spoilt child. Lutyens<sup>19</sup> is posing as usual, cheerful and dangerous as ever. He draws beautiful water-colour sketches of enormous Government Houses of white marble with tiny figures moving in them and deep

<sup>18</sup> William Malcolm Hailey, now Lord Hailey (1872- ), G.C.S.I., G.C.M.G., Chief Officer, Delhi, 1912-18; Member of Governor General's Council in Finance and Home Departments, 1919-24; Governor of Punjab, 1924-28; Governor of United Provinces, 1928-30 and 1931-34.

<sup>19</sup> Captain Swinton, formerly of the London County Council, Lutyens and Brodie, Sanitary Engineers of Liverpool, formed a Committee.





A Drive with the Maharajah of Dholpur. Rear: Earl of Donoughmore, A. L. R. Parsons and R. Verney. Front: Maharajah of Dholpur and Edwin Montagu—[Reproduced by courtesy of the Secretary of State for Commonwealth Relations, Great Britain].





blue skies. He refuses to look at anything about him, he hates Indian architecture as much as ever, he likes straight, final roads, and wants everything levelled. Rocks and palm trees are hateful to him. He has absorbed nothing of the country. The word 'picturesque' he finds beastly. He has, I fully believe, great genius; but, uncontrolled, he will produce a building or buildings intended to insult the aspirations and spirit of everything Indian."

On 28 January 1913, "I left Delhi with a new understanding of Indian difficulties. I wish Members of Council did not *lie* so freely. We must try and save Carmichael."

#### GWALIOR

25 January, 1913

Montagu had a long conversation with the Chief of the State, Scindia,<sup>20</sup> on an elephant out shooting and felt that "this is a complete answer to those scruples of conscience which sometimes make me feel that the joyful days spent in shikar—which play so large a part in Indian life—are misspent."

Scindia seemed to Montagu,

"a very vulgar, good-hearted little man . . . . All the furniture in the Palace, all his little devices for spending money, his orchestrion, his dictaphone, his plethora of little shooting boxes, his electric fountains and desert tramways, are all indicative of the same type of mind as the Chicago *nouveau riche*. Very quick of temper, with a childish sense of humour, frequent squawks of joy at the most elementary jokes, and a love for the most elaborate bunderbust with the most trivial results, he has really a very complex character. He worships with much advertisement the Anglo-Indian God of efficiency and has a true Maratta-like love of money. He also had very many grievances turning on money and prestige."

The visit to Gwalior ended with a tiger shoot which left the impression that "the old Indian pictures of tiger shoots with their towers, regiments and straight-tailed, galloping tigers, are marvellously accurate."

<sup>20</sup> Sir R. R. Scindia, G.C.S.I., G.C.V.O., Maharajah of Gwalior.



## LORMI

2 February, 1913

Next came “ten infinitely interesting, amusing and restful days” in the Lormi jungle, during which four tigers were shot.

## JABALPUR

14 February, 1913

After spending a day with Sir Benjamin Robertson<sup>21</sup> (“whom I find very impressive because of his ability, and very delightful”) Montagu left “with the full intention of seeing more of Robertson and the Central Provinces next time I go to India”. Montagu did not foresee that he was destined to leave the India Office after twelve months and not to return for five and a half years.

## MADRAS

18 February, 1913

On 19 February Montagu visited the old church of Fort Saint George, the oldest in India, interesting in its memorials and sculptures. “Who would have thought that Titus Oats was connected by a nephew with Madras? Who would have thought that to this church one would have to go to find that Yale, the founder of the great university, bore arms?”

During four days at Madras Montagu saw an incredible number of people and things. The people included Sir Sankaran Nair<sup>22</sup>—an old friend, “an exceptionally clever man, but more at home in the National Liberal Club than in Madras; he deplores the increase of racial feeling in the North of India. He hears that in the Punjab half the population can always be relied on in case of difficulty to oppose the British. This is the memorial to Lord Minto; this is why Dane sat on the Aga Khan’s attempt to abolish cow sacrifices;

<sup>21</sup> Sir B. Robertson, K.C.S.I., K.C.M.G., Chief Commissioner of the Central Provinces.

<sup>22</sup> Sir Sankaran Nair (1857-1934), President of High Court of Madras, 1907; Member for Education of Viceroy’s Council, 1915; Member of Secretary of State’s Council in London, 1919-22.

this is why Hewett<sup>23</sup> urged the Mohammedans to agitate for separate representation."

The places visited included colleges, and Montagu commented: "How these educational institutions depress me! The lack of personal relations with the boys, the reliance on text-books, the air of machinery, the examination atmosphere, the listless resignation of the teachers and their second-rateness. The Missionary Colleges are far better, for they depend for their success on the personal hold the missionaries, who are *ex hypothesi* enthusiasts, have on the students."

A dinner party was, as usual, depressing.

"The fact is that, however confidently it may be said that the Englishman has succeeded in India, the Englishwoman has been a conspicuous failure. She feels race prejudice far more than the men (so, by the bye do the Indian women) and she has little to do. She cannot do the parson's daughter or the squire's wife among people she does not understand, in districts where she is only allowed to remain a short time. So she degenerates, gets unhealthy and embittered by the many separations from family. Her pluck, which is tremendous, is rather wasted."

At Madras Montagu met Mrs. Besant<sup>24</sup> for the first time. "Poor old lady! It is difficult to believe her sexual. I find her very attractive, but her legal difficulties are very great."

Montagu remarked on the astonishing difference between Madras and any place in the North of India.

"It is not merely the ten-mile long beautiful sea front; it is not so much a matter of scenery at all. . . . It is that, so far as I could discover, there is no racial question at all. The English and Indians live together on terms which, if not accurately to be described as "intimate" or "friendly", are certainly not as yet antagonistic or fearful. They argue with one another, and their relations are franker

<sup>23</sup> Sir John P. Hewett (1854-1941), K.C.S.I., K.B.E., Governor of United Provinces, 1907-12; in Mesopotamia in 1919.

<sup>24</sup> Mrs. Besant (1847-1933), Founded India Home Rule League in 1916; President of the Indian National Congress in 1918; A Theosophist.



and more intelligent. I found later that all this is partly due to tolerant contempt.

“One has here, as elsewhere among the majority of the educated Indians, a desire for more power. Not I think, for more democracy; for, however horrible it may be for an Englishman of my way of thinking to learn, the clever Indian wants executive power and executive opportunity, but he is not a democrat. If he does not believe in caste, he believes in wealth, and the division, so acute in Northern India, between the Hindu and the Mohammedan, is replaced in Southern India by the vital, almost insurmountable, gulf between Brahmin and non-Brahmin . . . . So that, just as in Northern India the absence of unity and democratic spirit makes democratic institutions a mockery, however democratic they may appear on paper, very few of them insist on social reform as a prelude to any political concession. Caste seems to me to be at present the enduring fibre of Indian organisation, and, unless there is a Western social awakening in India to replace it, to lose it would produce anarchy, for the correcting hand, which puts things in order, would be gone. In all probability one gets more democracy in India by things which appear undemocratic than by paper constitutions.”

Montagu heard in Madras, even more than elsewhere, the complaint that

“the excellence of institutions in theory is vitiated in practice by a superfluity of rules, codes and regulations which sap the nerve and the responsibility of the official, and make him a machine, and not a human being . . . . I am certain from what I have seen in India that, outside the Punjab, in the vast majority of cases this is simply due to sheer hard work. If only we could burn nine-tenths of the rules, and make the District Officer in charge of the simple country folk more like an English country gentleman or an immature pro-consul; if only we had some means of getting rid of the inefficient except by promotion or transference to the judicial side, we should get on far better.”

After advocating the increased employment of Indians in administration, Montagu adds: “It had often occurred to me that Lord

Curzon was very superficial in his judgment, in talking about sense of honour and sense of truth among Indians. I suggest it is a difference of standard, and not a lower standard." For example, Montagu explains, his servants lied to him consistently, but served him devotedly and faithfully. "Truth in evidence is not appreciated by most Indians, but they are not dishonest."

#### MYSORE

22 February, 1913

To Montagu's "astonishment, indignation and surprise," the Resident, Sir Hugh Daly<sup>25</sup>, had left Mysore and Montagu could not see him. "I regard it as an insult to my Office that he should have absented himself without a word of explanation". Also, "Any opportunity of getting a tiger was lost by the fact that definite announcement of our intentions was only transmitted to the shikar officially on the 13th of this month, and so on."

Montagu was met by R. H. Campbell, the Maharajah's Private Secretary.

"I like Campbell very much indeed. He is a very efficient, well-mannered, impressive person of forty-five years of age . . . . His father was an Indian soldier, and he and his five brothers have all found service in India, military or civil, and he destines his two sons for the Empire. It is melancholy to think how exceptional his view is, but cheerful to find it . . . . He realises the astounding changes which have gone on since he came out twenty-eight years ago [in 1885], but the complications and difficulties have merely increased for him the attractiveness of the service. This, I am confident, is the right view. . . . Those men who are not sufficiently adaptable to realise the altered conditions for being associated with the Indians in the Government of the country must be ruthlessly discarded."

At 4.30 a.m. on 23 February 1913 Montagu "got on a good elephant and started off in search of bison. The jungle is far more beautiful than anything I have seen. Nestling at the foot of the Nilgiri hills, the little marshy rivers, glorious clumps of giant bamboos, scarlet-flowered trees called, I believe, 'the flame trees of the forest', and others covered with bright salmon-coloured flowers,

<sup>25</sup> Sir Hugh Daly (1860-1939), G.C.B., K.C.S.I., C.I.E.



teak trees with withered brown leaves falling now and then with a tremendous clatter, and bright-coloured butterflies made up a splendid scene." Montagu succeeded in shooting a bison, but, when invited to go and shoot a wild elephant, "I could not find it in me to do so".

## BOMBAY

1 *March*, 1913

The tour finished with a few strenuous days at Bombay. The Public Service Commission, under Lord Islington,<sup>26</sup> was sitting in Bombay. "Islington has shown marvellous capacity for handling men, and very great tact. He is not very clever, and has not yet, I think, any grasp of the problems with which he is confronted. The Committee as a whole has been so frightened at the harm it was alleged to be doing that its courage has gone, and it is for ever endeavouring to limit its terms of reference in order, if possible, to avoid difficult questions." Of various members of the Commission Montagu wrote :

"Ghokale has been ill. Chirol<sup>27</sup> has proved, I fear, too old, rather short-tempered and has been very ill. Ramsay Macdonald has shown himself very clever and very popular, but he is very easily impressed by his latest surroundings, and he is not wholly honest with himself; the consequence is that he has been as carefully muzzled and watched by Sly [Sir Frank Sly of the I.C.S.] as a Rugby three-quarter is marked by his opponent. Islington has plodded along, and Morison has shown that invariable characteristic, hesitancy, which makes him very bad to go tiger-shooting with."

Montagu took a great interest in the Bombay Improvement Trust, though

"I am bound to say that I did not see in four hours' journey one single building of architectural beauty or architectural pretensions.

<sup>26</sup> Lord Islington, Under Secretary of State, India Office. See note to Chapter II.

<sup>27</sup> Sir Valentine Chirol (1852-1929), Editor of *The Times*, 1899-1912. Wrote *Indian Unrest* in 1910 and Tilak sued him, but lost his case in 1919.

To test fully the value of the Trust's work, one has to see the densely-populated parts of Bombay. Nothing I have ever seen in the way of slums, nothing that I have ever dreamt, or read of in romance, nothing in the South of London, in Liverpool, in Gamlingay, in Turkey, in Tunis, in Seville or in Dublin compares with Bombay."

Montagu contrasted the ceremonial cleanliness of the slum-dwellers with their filthy surroundings.

"When I looked into the kitchen, one of the inhabitants told Orr<sup>28</sup> that he was getting near their food, which he must not touch. He assured them he would not touch it, and then the man pointed out that his shadow was falling on it. But within the area on the other side of the window filth was poured down the gutter from the windows and the whole tenement smelt of stale urine from the outside. The gutters of the narrow passages are open and goats, cattle, dogs and rats are everywhere, and everybody throws waste into them."

## DELHI

*5 March*

Montagu had a very long talk with the Viceroy, Lord Hardinge.

"He is very much better, and I am fairly convinced he will now mend, at least I hope so. . . . He told me that Lord Crewe had offered him six months' leave, but he had refused it pending the summer, for he had great hopes it was unnecessary."

The Viceroy and Montagu remained as gloomy as ever about the Council. "E is his greatest subject for irritated obloquy. He says he was only appointed because Lady Minto liked his wife (she is certainly a nice woman) and that he has been wilfully stupid and maliciously obstinate throughout."

Montagu commented in the Diary: "My trouble is that even if you get rid of this Council, I cannot see a better one anywhere. Really the I.C.S. has no great men in it, only good machines." "No, there is much that is depressing in India; but above all I

<sup>28</sup> James P. Orr., C.S.I., C.B.E., Chairman of the City of Bombay Improvement Trust.



put this partly stupid, narrow-minded, scheming, low-minded, Council as it is and will be."

Montagu set down in his Diary his own scheme for the reform of the I.C.S.—It was directed at making the bureaucracy less bureaucratic; it included a pronouncement against the theory that seniority is a sufficient reason—or any reason—for promotion, and "a rigorous method of getting rid of bad men, something like a court-martial." It also included the appointment of as many Indians as were efficient. "I should be delighted to feel that we had produced large numbers of Indians sufficiently able, disinterested and loyal to swamp our Service. But this is impossible, and I think always will be, because the Indians are not efficient, and I fear not likely to become so in this sense."

Montagu was distressed by the rejection of his scheme for reforming the Council.

"Lord Sydenham,<sup>29</sup> Lord Hardinge, Wilson and Chirol all sympathise deeply with my bitter disappointment . . . . It looks almost as if I was intended to feel, what I do feel, that I return home with advice consistently disregarded, a thoroughly discredited person. And yet this view is so difficult to entertain without question—resignation would then be the indicated course—because my plans are approved of, and in India anyhow I have found no dissentient from my views. This makes it all the harder to bear, and all the harder to understand."

Montagu spoke to Lord Hardinge about the possibility of his getting leave to come to India again—suggesting a tour to Ceylon ("for the purpose of my plan for annexation I must know more of its population and institutions and the wishes of its people"), Travancore, Cochin, Burma, Assam, Nepal, Bhopal, Baroda, Rangoon, Kathiawar and also Indore and Delhi. Hardinge "was quite agreeable. He said I had been no trouble, but, on the contrary, a help."

One of the last of Montagu's talks at Delhi was with Fleetwood Wilson, who took a very serious view of the Mohammedan unrest. The Aga Khan had told Montagu that, "if anything happened to Turkey in Asia, there would be serious trouble. . . . and some

<sup>29</sup> Lord Sydenham (1848-1933), G.C.M.G., G.B.E., K.C.S.I., Governor of Bombay, 1907-13.

declaration ought to be made of our determination to maintain Turkey's independence and integrity." This foreshadowed the events of 1922, which ended Montagu's career.

Montagu was in a pessimistic mood: "If we increase education, but do not improve it or enliven it because we cannot get good material, if the Indians go on hating us, if the officials are all suspicious and dissatisfied, and if the Council goes on quarrelling, I do honestly think that the fear of something like another Mutiny is not ridiculous."

### BOMBAY

8 March, 1913

Before breakfast Montagu had a walk with Ramsay Macdonald. "He is really a very attractive man, but a child in the hands of the I.C.S. who realise his extraordinary vanity, his intellectual dishonesty, and his refusal to modify his views by evidence. . . . R.M. is making a great success", he adds, "with the I.C.S. and especially with young and pretty women!"

On leaving Bombay Montagu wrote:

"India is absorbingly interesting and difficult. Would that I had more opportunity to help ! One feels so much that one is shrieking like Cassandra . . . . No one seems to disagree with, or to take, my advice: what with no Parliamentary opportunity, the censure-like action of Asquith and Crewe in regard to the Commission, and the difficulties about a Private Secretary etc. I go home without zest and rather depressed. India ought to have a great official purifying and it does so want energy. Almost a revolution of ideal and method is needed to avert a revolution of its people. One cannot feel optimistic after being there and discussing almost every problem with nearly everybody of importance."





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Sir David Waley was born in 1887. Educated at Rugby and Balliol, he joined the Treasury in 1910. His first link with Edwin Montagu came not long after, when he was Montagu's private secretary for a short period during 1916. He served in the First World War, winning the M.C. in 1917, and in the following year his marriage brought on a second link with Montagu since it so happened that his wife was Montagu's niece.

From the time that he returned to the Treasury in 1919, until he retired in 1948, Sir David Waley was almost exclusively concerned with overseas finance, being in charge of this Division of the Treasury for the latter part of his service there. In 1933 he was created C.B. and in 1943 K.C.M.G.

Sir David Waley's active career by no means ended when he retired from the Civil Service at the age of 60, for he then took up many company directorships as well as undertaking voluntary work in connection with two charitable organisations. His love of the arts found an outlet in his work as a Director of the Sadlers Wells Trust and as Chairman of the Mercury Theatre Trust.

By his death in January 1962, Sir David Waley was deprived of the opportunity of seeing the publication of this book, to the writing of which he devoted much time during the last years of his life.



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